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| IDENTIFIERS | Content Area Teaching; Illinois State Board of Education; Support Personnel |

ABSTRACT

In an effort to help establish consistent opportunities for meaningful staff development, administrators and staff associated with three early childhood education programs funded by the Illinois State Board of Education were surveyed about their needs and interests. A questionnaire examined the extent of the respondent's knowledge of, or experience in, a specific content area in early childhood education, and level of interest in knowing more about the content area. The questionnaire was divided into the following categories, each covering various content areas: (1) developmentally appropriate practice and curriculum; (2) family involvement and family systems; (3) observation and assessment; (4) language and culture; and (5) community collaboration. Of the 2,136 questionnaires returned for this study, 2,066 were analyzed. Results were analyzed according to region, job (teachers, administrators, and support staff), and program type. Results showed that the language and culture category was of most interest to respondents, and that scores concerning gaps in knowledge in subcategories in this section were the highest for each region and program. Recommendations for staff development and professional growth programs are offered. (MM)

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# RESULTS OF THE

# STATEWIDE STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

# FOR PERSONNEL ASSOCIATED WITH

# PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE

# PREVENTION INITIATIVE PROGRAMS FOR AT RISK INFANTS AND TODDLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

# MODEL EARLY CHILDHOOD PARENTAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

Prepared by

Illinois State Board of Education
in conjunction with
Illinois Resource Center

May, 1992

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was designed to identify the needs and interests of administrators, staff members and other personnel associated with three early childhood education programs funded by the Illinois State Board of Education: *Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure, Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families,* and *Model Early Childhood Parental Training Programs.* The information was collected via a questionnaire, which was divided into five categories: 1) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum;* 2) *Family Involvement / Family Systems;* 3) *Observation and Assessment;* 4) *Language and Culture;* and 5) *Community Collaboration.* Each category is composed of various content areas. Also taken into account was the variation of results by region, type of program, and capacity of each staff member within his/her program.

The results for the total sample indicate that Categories 3, 4 and 5 form the single most important set of areas in the analysis. Category 4, *Language and Culture*; specifically, 4C *(Working with Multiple Language Groups),* 4D *(Second Language Acquisition),* and 4E *(First and Second Language Use in the Classroom)* -- are of most interest to the respondents of the questionnaire. The "knowledge gap" scores for those content areas were the highest for each region, program and administrative / staff capacity.

Category 5, *Community Collaboration,* is the second most important content category. Area 5B *(How to Access Support and Services from the Private Sector),* has a knowledge gap score only slightly lower than that of Content Area 4C. Of the two content areas included in Category 3, 3B *(Authentic Assessment)* has the highest knowledge gap score.

Respondents also expressed a high level of interest in Category 2, *Family*

*Involvement / Family Systems.* Content areas receiving particular attention were: 2M *(Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse);* 2I *(Development of Parent Support Groups);* and 2J *(Family Literacy Issues).*

While Category 1, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum,* was the only one which displayed negative knowledge gaps, it contained the highest absolute knowledge gap score for the total sample, namely Area 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children).* Content Areas 1F *(Literacy Development),* and 1J *(Physical Knowledge),* were also of significant interest to respondents.

Similar findings resulted from analysis by region. However, while the pattern established in the analysis of the total sample was replicated in each region, one consistent difference emerged: Region 6 always showed higher perceived knowledge gap scores than the other regions. This finding suggests that Region 6 should be the area where staff development activities are first offered. It makes no difference whether the perceived knowledge gap scores are the result of a lack of knowledge / experience or of an especially strong desire to know more; a combination of the two factors is most likely at work. This suggests that Region 6 is an ideal test site for new staff development / professional growth programs.

Many differences were found in the analysis by capacity in which one serves his/her program. Teachers displayed a lower perceived knowledge gap for Categories 1 and 2 than did the total sample, but a score identical to the total sample for Categories 3, 4 and 5. Teacher assistants / aides showed greater perceived knowledge gaps for all content areas than did the total sample. Support staff, consisting of parent / family / community

coordinator / liaison and support service providers, showed somewhat greater perceived knowledge gap scores for areas included in Category 1; somewhat lower perceived knowledge gap scores for Category 2; and approximately the same scores for Categories 3, 4, and 5. Coordinators / directors showed considerably lower perceived knowledge gap scores for all content areas in all categories.

The overall results of the study suggest that a staff development / professional growth program should offer the following content areas: *Language and Culture, Community Collaboration, Observation and Assessment,* Family Involvement / Family Systems and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum.* Everyone would benefit from information on: 4C *(Working with Multiple Language Groups);* 4D *(Second Language Acquisition);* 4E *(First and Second Language Use in the Classroom);* and 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children).* Teachers would appear to benefit from a program dealing with 2M *(Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse),* 2I *(Development of Parent Support Groups),* and 2J *(Family Literacy Issues).* For support staff, Content Areas 2G *(Planning and Implementing Parent Workshops),* 1F *(Literacy Development),* 1I *(Creative Arts)* and 1J *(Physical Knowledge)* would be appropriate. Teacher assistants / aides, having had no formal professional training, would profit from exposure to all content areas.

Illinois State Board of Education
*in conjunction with*
Illinois Resource Center

EARLY CHILDHOOD
COMPREHENSIVE STAFF
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## MAP OF REGIONS

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## INTRODUCTION:

This report is based on the responses to the Staff Development Questionnaire of administrators, staff members and other personnel associated with three early childhood programs funded by the Illinois State Board of Education. *Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure, Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families,* and *Model Early Childhood Parental Training Programs.* It was exclusive of those programs funded through the Chicago Board of Education. The survey was conducted to fulfill two purposes:

> 1. "To develop a staff directory of all service providers associated with the three early childhood programs funded by the Illinois State Board of Education for statewide distribution."
>
> 2. "To establish consistent opportunities for meaningful staff development and professional growth for all service providers identified with state funded early childhood programs through ongoing local and statewide activities."

This report is presented as partial fulfillment of the second purpose: specifically, "to establish consistent opportunities for *meaningful staff development ...*".

## Methods:

Completed questionnaires were returned by 2,136 administrators and staff members from throughout the state. Unfortunately, either through data entry errors or improper completion of the questionnaire, only 2,066 questionnaires were usable for the analysis; a loss of 70 respondents or 3.3 percent of the total sample.

The questionnaire was designed to determine both the extent of a respondent's knowledge of or experience in a specific content area of early childhood education and the level of interest of the respondent in knowing more about the content area. Each dimension, knowledge/experience and interest in knowing more, was scored on a four

point scale in which 1 was low and 4 high. If the respondent did not provide an answer for a content area on a dimension, a score of 0 was assigned. Thus, the scores for each dimension for each content area range from 0 to 4.

In addition to the tabulations for the total sample, separate tabulations were generated for each dimension of each content area broken down by the program or project type (*Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure, Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families,* and *Model Early Childhood Parental Training Programs*), by capacity in which the respondent served the program or project (*Coordinator / Director, Teacher, Teacher Assistant / Aide,* or *Support Service Provider—Parent / Family / Community Coordinator / Liaison*), and by region of the state in which the program is located (*Regions 1,2,3,4* and *6*).

The questionnaire was divided into five major categories: *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum; Family Involvement/Family Systems; Observation and Assessment; Language and Culture;* and *Community Collaboration.* In the discussion that follows the five content categories are maintained with one small exception. Category 3, *Observation and Assessment,* consists of two content areas; Category 4 consists of five content areas; and Category 5 consists of two content areas. These categories are combined into a single analysis, with the discussion of each content category clearly delineated.

In the analysis that follows, a new variable has been created. This new variable is called "perceived knowledge gap". A knowledge gap is defined conceptually as a perceived lack of knowledge about a content area. It has been operationalized as the difference between the dimension of "interest in knowing more" about a particular

content area and the perceived current "knowledge/experience" of the content area by the respondent. Thus, if a respondent indicates that he/she has a "high" (4) interest in knowing more about a specific content area and his/her knowledge/ experience is indicated as '3', then the knowledge gap for that respondent is 1. Similarly, if a respondent indicates that his/her current knowledge/experience in a given content area is '2' and does not respond to the "interest in knowing more" dimension, then that respondent is scored as '-2' on the perceived knowledge gap, indicating that current knowledge is greater than desired knowledge. Negative scores are thus interpreted to mean very little, if any, overall interest in that content area for future staff development or professional growth programs, while positive scores indicate some interest in the content area; the higher the value of the perceived knowledge gap the more the interest in knowing more about a given content area. All of the following discussion is based on graphical analysis of perceived knowledge gap.

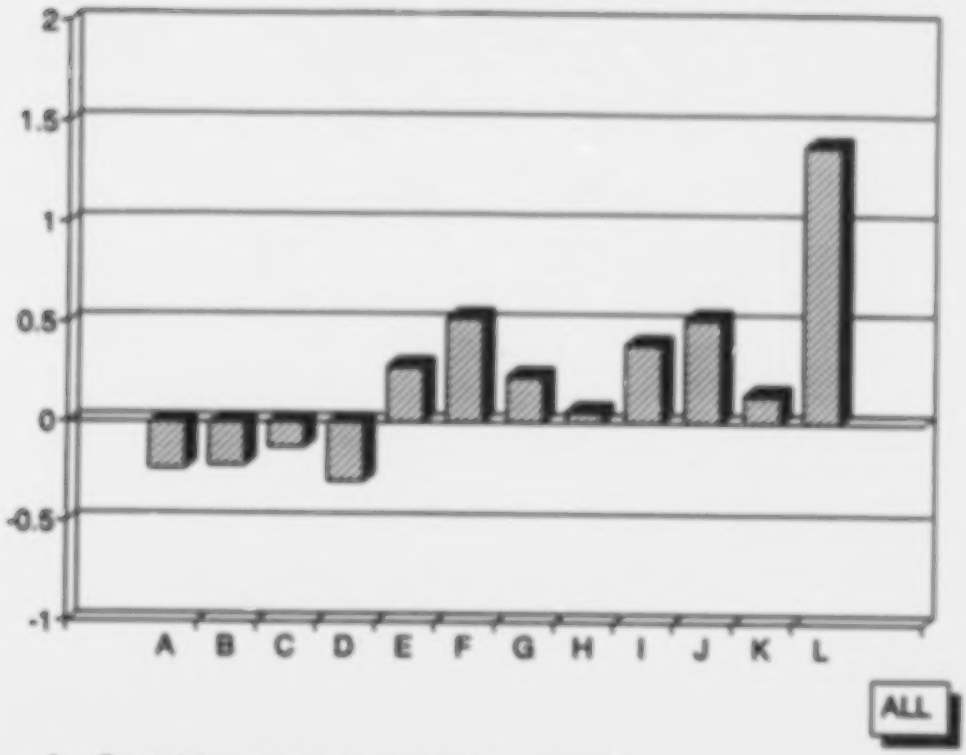
## RESULTS:

### Total sample:

On the following three pages are graphs of perceived knowledge gap by Category 1, Category 2, and Categories 3, 4 and 5 for the entire sample. The graphs are all drawn to the same scale with the same maximums and minimums on the perceived knowledge gap axis. The width of the bars varies somewhat from question to question based on the number of items in the questions; the fewer the items, the wider the bars.

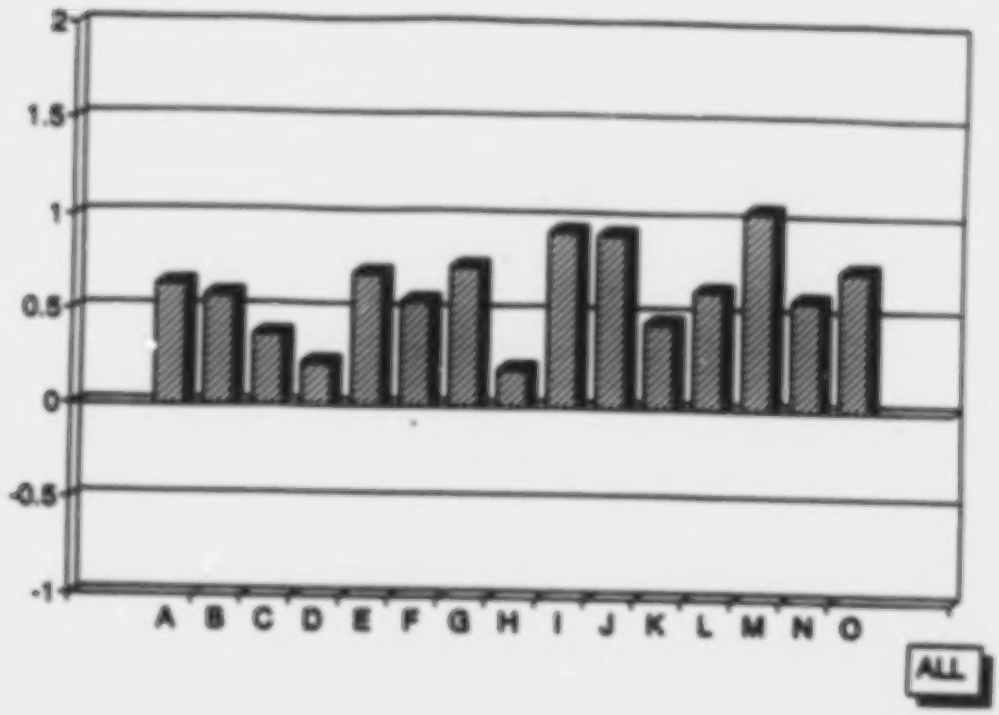
The first four content areas of Category 1 are: 1A *(Organizing the Environment for Learning)*; 1B *(Planning and Developing Daily Scheduling)*; 1C (*Learning Through Play)*;

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM



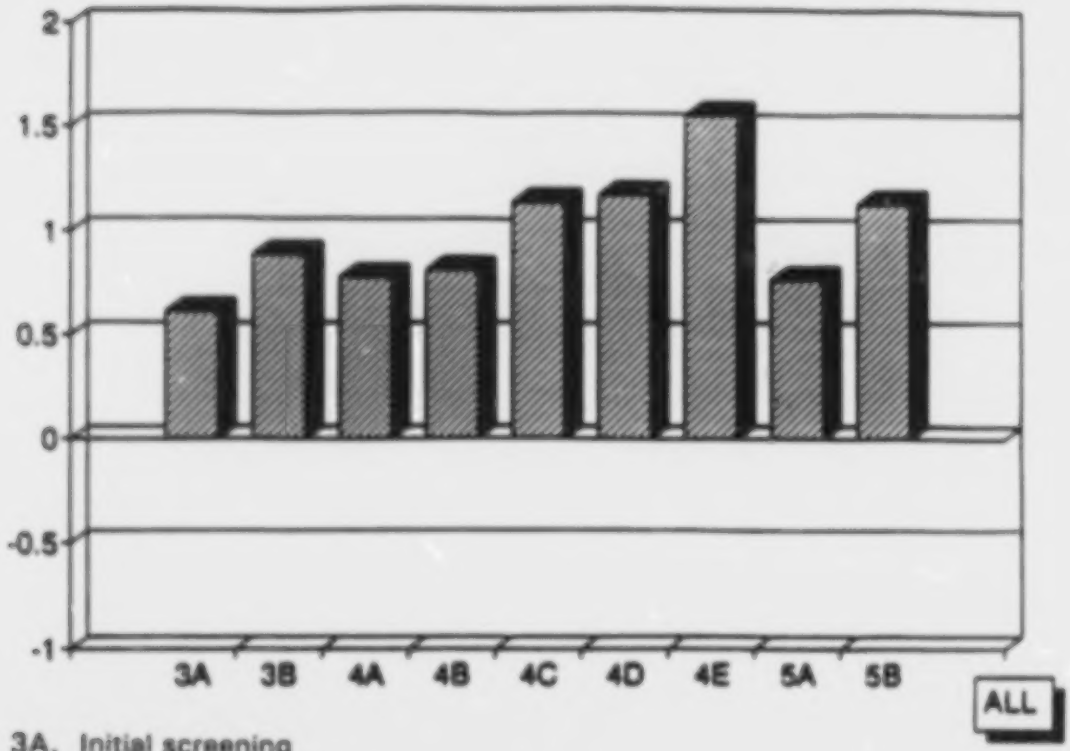

A. Organizing the environment for learning
B. Planning and developing daily scheduling
C. Learning through play
D. Building positive relationships with children
E. Language and cognitive development
F. Literacy development...
G. Fostering social emotional development
H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
K. Children's literature
L. Using computers with young children

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
C. Attachment and separation issues
D. Communicating effectively with parents
E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
G. Planning and implementing parent workshops
H. Planning and implementing home visits
I. Development of parent support groups
J. Family literacy issues
K. Developing lending toy libraries
L. Child abuse and neglect issues
M. Children and families affected by substance abuse
N. Surveying parent interests...
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION




3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

and 1D *(Building Positive Relationships with Children)*. These are the only areas with negative perceived knowledge gaps. The negative knowledge gap indicates that, on the whole, the respondents perceived themselves as having more knowledge and/or experience than interest in learning more about those topics. Content Area 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children)*, on the other hand, has the highest positive knowledge gap on the entire questionnaire. The high positive knowledge gap for Question 1L indicates a great deal more interest in knowing more about this content area. While the remaining content areas covered under Question 1 all have positive perceived knowledge gaps, with the exception of 1F (Literacy Development), and 1J (Physical Knowledge), they are relatively small in comparison with those for the following categories.

All of the content areas covered under Category 2, *Family Involvement / Family Systems*, show positive knowledge gaps. The most important is for Content Area 2M *(Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse)*. Content Area 2I (Development of Parent Support Groups), and Content Area 2J *(Family Literacy Issues)*, both show perceived knowledge gaps only slightly less than 1.0 and a little lower than Area 2M. Three content areas follow: 2O *(Understanding the Principles of Adult Learning)*; 2G *(Planning and Implementing Parent Workshops)*; and 2E *(Assessing Family Needs, Making Referrals, and Following Up)*. The perceived knowledge gap scores range from .697 area 2E to .746 for area 2O. Five more content areas have perceived knowledge gap scores greater than 0.5: 2A (Characteristics of At-Risk Families and Meeting Their Needs); 2L *(Child Abuse and Child Neglect Issues)*; 2N *(Surveying Parent Interests and Talents In Order to Involve Them In Your Program)*; 2B *(Issues Affecting Parent Involvement)*; and 2F *(Developing Ideas for At-Home Activities Involving Parent and*

*Child).* The values of the perceived knowledge gap scores for the five content areas range from .639 for 2A to .553 for 2F. The remaining four content areas all have perceived knowledge gap scores below 0.5, making them less attractive subjects for staff development or professional growth programs.

As indicated in the Methods section of this report, Categories 3, 4, and 5 are graphed together. The content areas included in these three categories form the single most important set of areas in the analysis. Four content areas, three from Category 4, *Language and Culture* and one from Category 5, *Community Collaboration*, have perceived knowledge gap scores above 1.0, and none have scores less than 0.5. Category 4, on the whole, is probably the single most important content category in terms of perceived knowledge gap in the study. Three content areas, 4C (*Working With Multiple Language Groups*), 4D (*Second Language Acquisition*), and 4E (*First and Second Language Use in the Classroom*), all have perceived knowledge gap scores above 1.0, ranging from 1.140 for Content Area 4C to 1.175 for 4D. Category 5, *Community Collaboration*, is the second most important content category. Content Area 5B *(How to Access Support and Services from the Private Sector)*, has a knowledge gap score of 1.137, only slightly lower than that of Content Area 4C. Of the two content areas included in category 3, 3B (*Authentic Assessment*), has the highest knowledge gap score, 0.893.

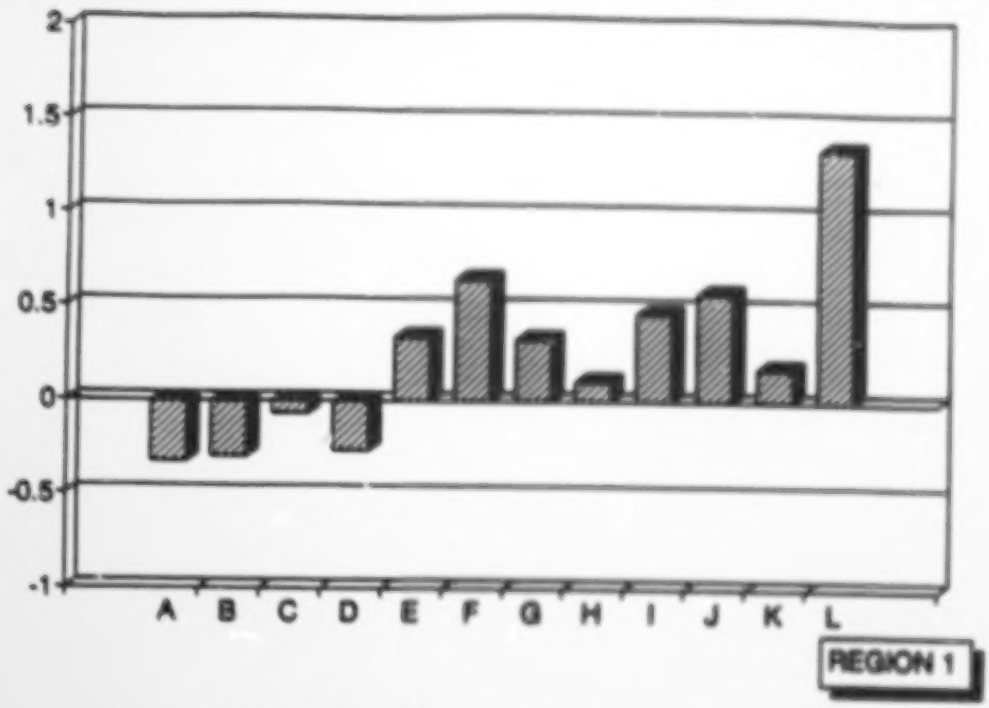
The preceding discussion of results for the total sample sets the framework within which the results from the three breakdown variables can be evaluated.

**Region:**

This report refers to five of six regions in Illinois. Programs funded through the Chicago Board of Education, the fifth region, were not included: consequently, there are no data for that region. In the pages that follow, the graphs for Regions 1 - 4 and 6 are presented.

A quick comparison of the five region graphs with each other and with those for the total sample shows essentially the same pattern in all, with a few interesting variations. The first four content areas for Category 1 are all negative, ie. below the 0.0 line, with a few variations in the relative values of the knowledge gap scores. Similarly, Content Area 1H *(Motor and Physical Development)*, has the smallest positive knowledge gap score in every region except Region 6, and Content Area 1L *(Using Computers With Young Children)*, has the largest positive knowledge gap in all five regions. Regions 1, 2, and 3 have a somewhat lower perceived knowledge gap score than the total sample for Content Area 1L, while Regions 4 and 6 have somewhat higher scores.

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM

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H. Motor and physical development
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L. Using computers with young children

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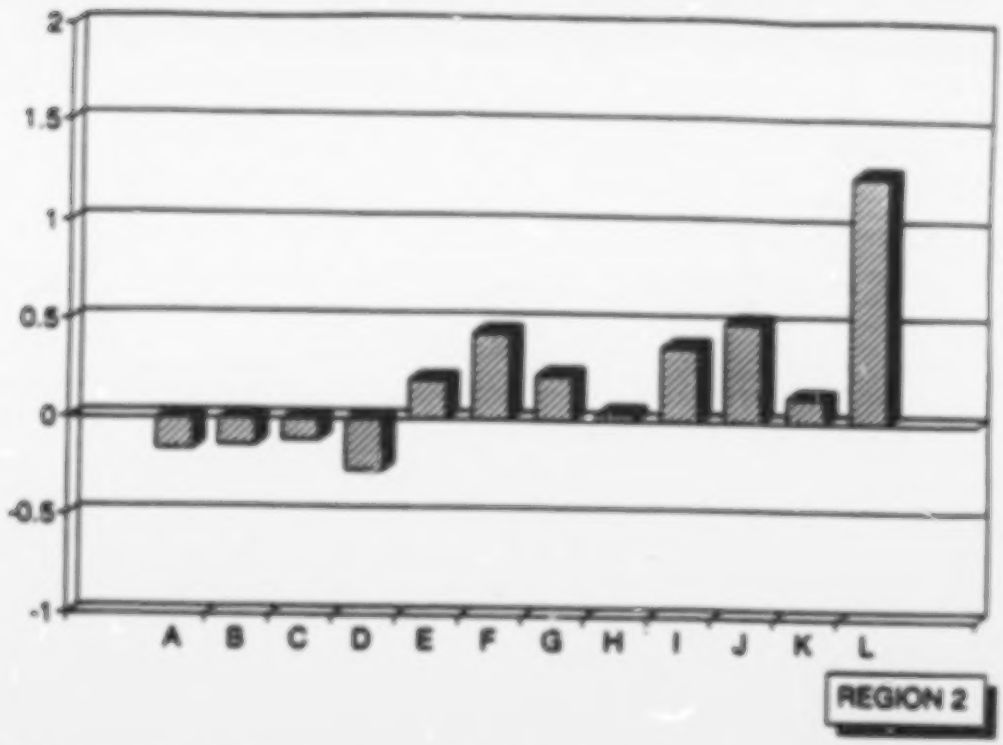


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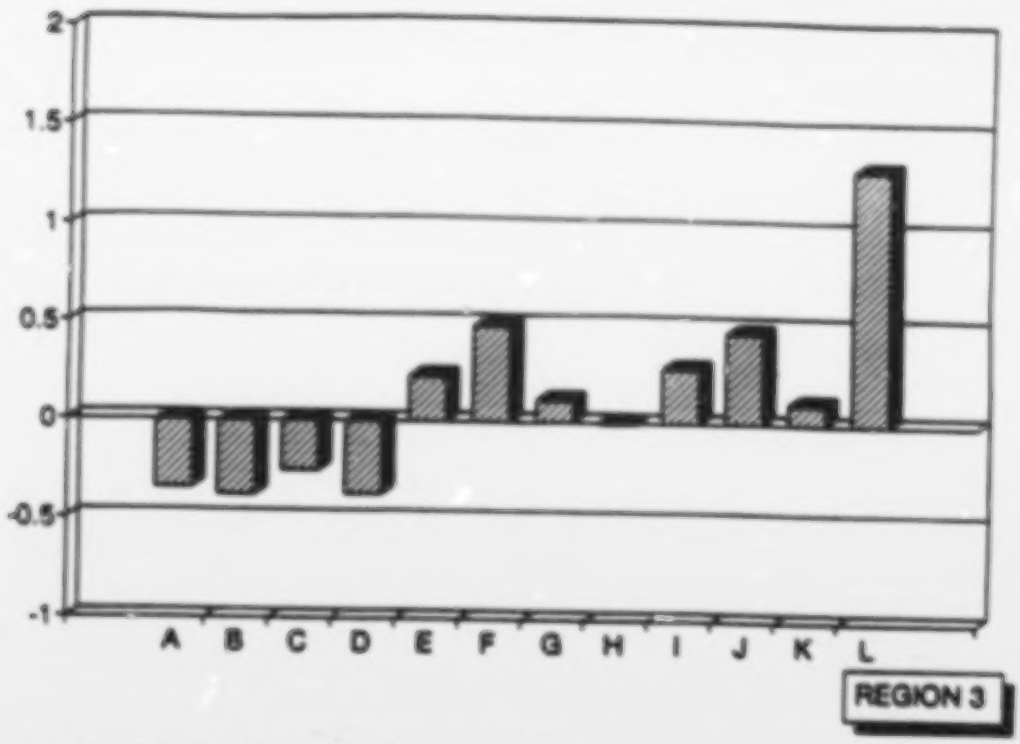


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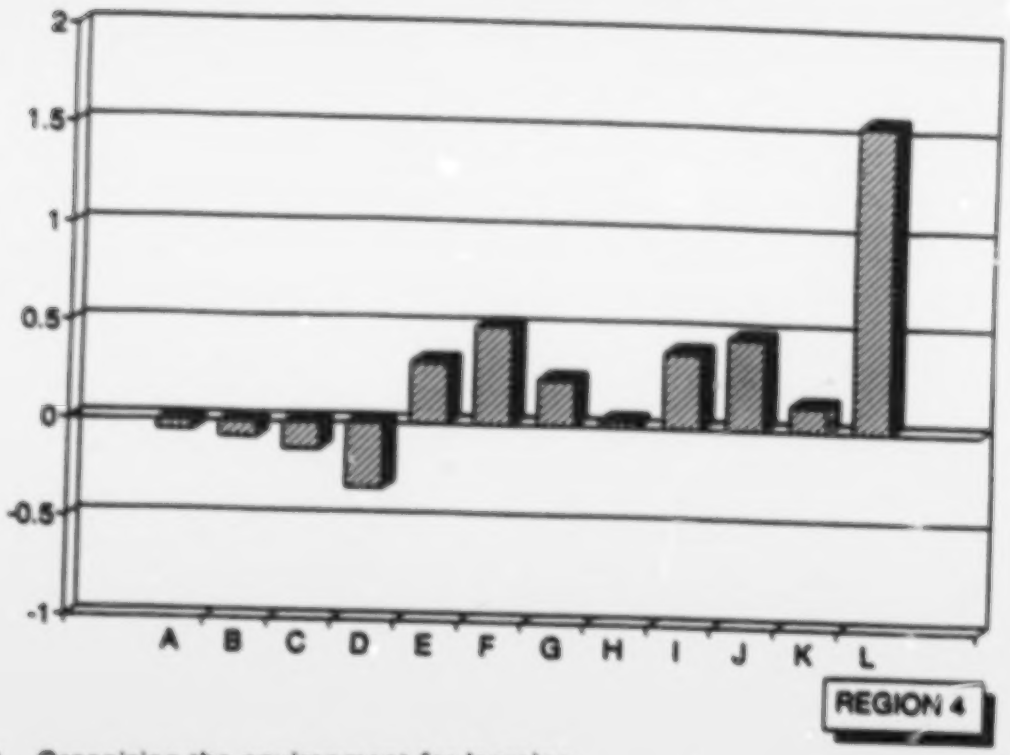


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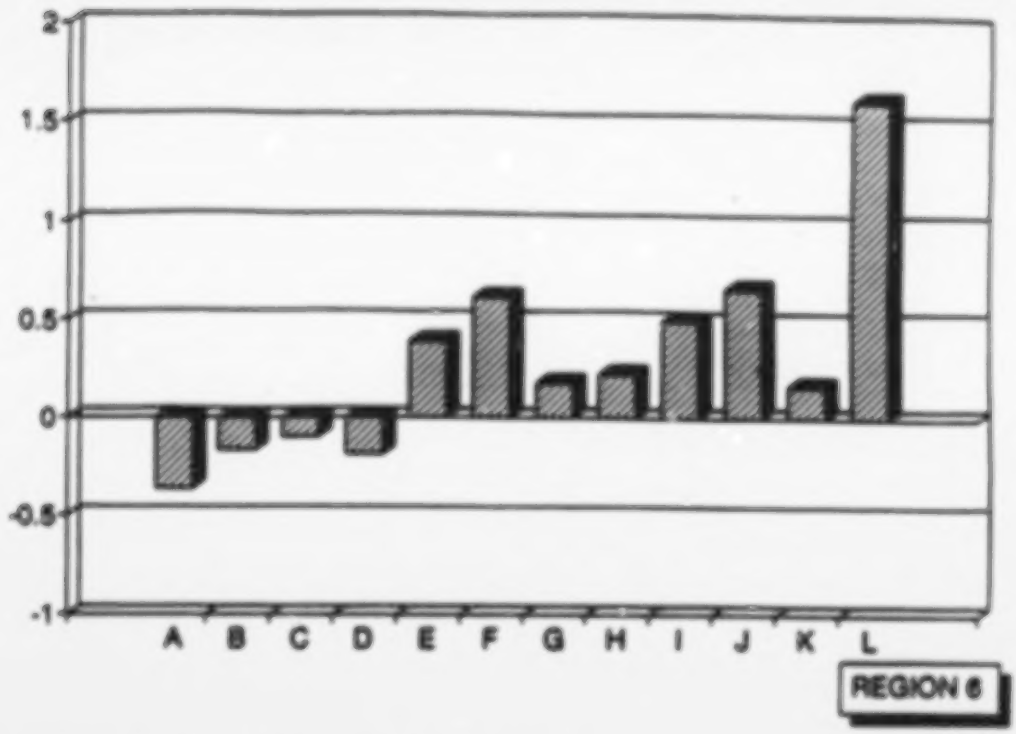


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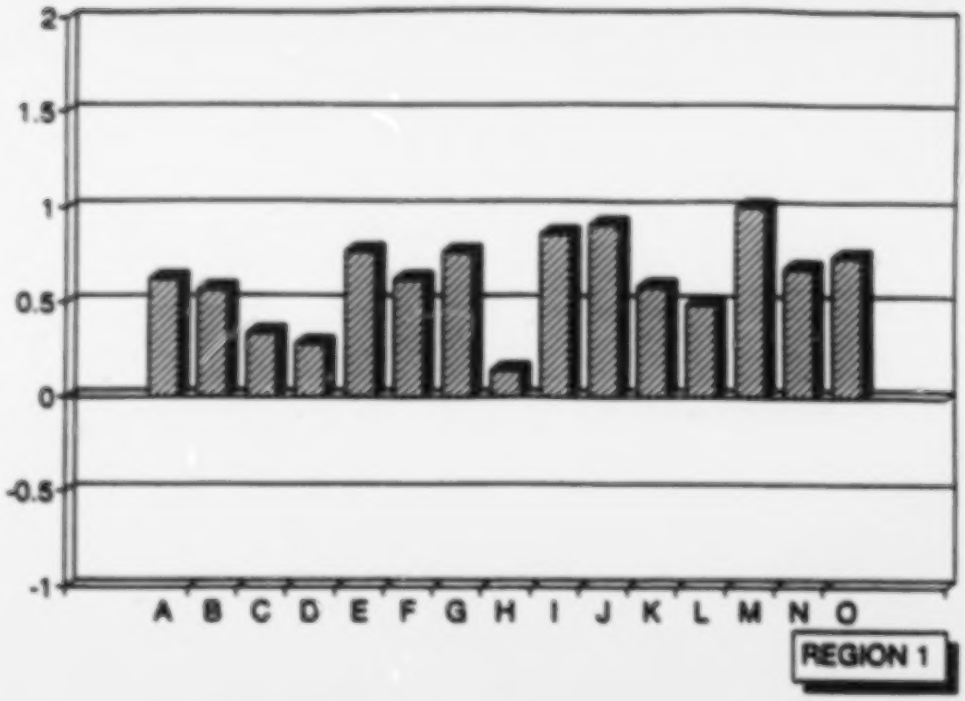
The graphs for Category 2, *Family Involvement / Family Systems*, for each region are remarkably similar to each other and to the graph for the total sample (see pages 16-20). The single largest difference is the size of the perceived knowledge gap for Region 6. The perceived knowledge gap scores for Region 6 are noticeably greater than those for the total sample and, naturally, those for the other four regions. Similarly, the knowledge gap scores for Regions 2 and 3 are somewhat lower than the total sample, while those for Regions 1 and 4 are almost identical to one another and to the total sample.

In terms of the objectives of the study, "to establish consistent opportunities for meaningful staff development", the analysis by region indicates that the staff of programs located in Region 6 would benefit most from programs based on *Family Involvement / Family Systems.*

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS

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B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
C. Attachment and separation issues
D. Communicating effectively with parents
E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
G. Planning and implementing parent workshops
H. Planning and implementing home visits
I. Development of parent support groups
J. Family literacy issues
K. Developing lending toy libraries
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N. Surveying parent interests...
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

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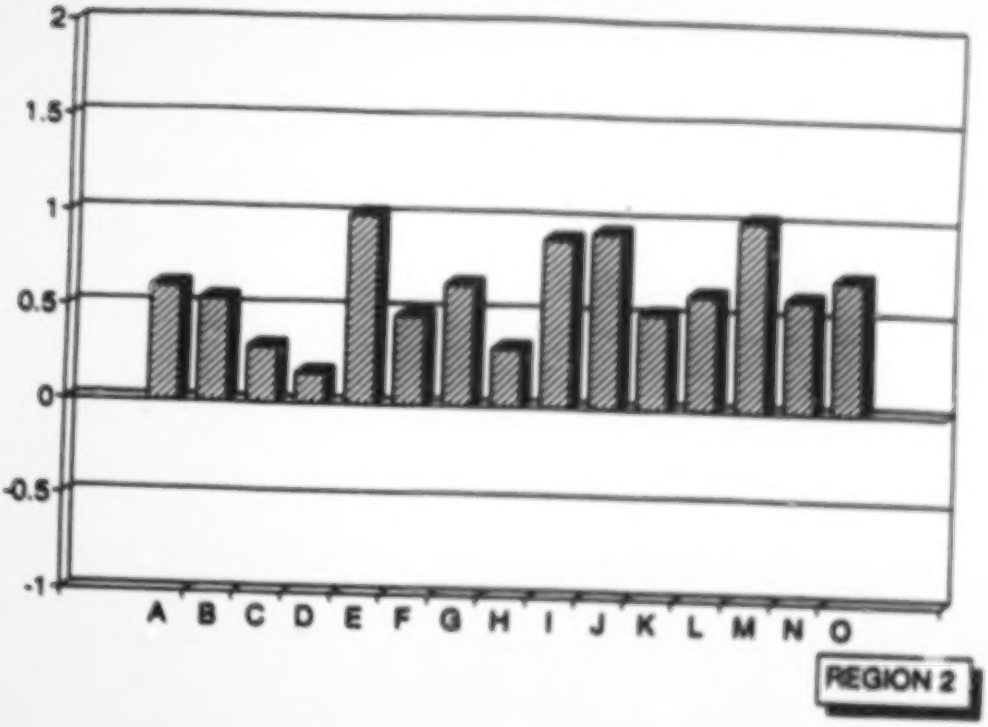


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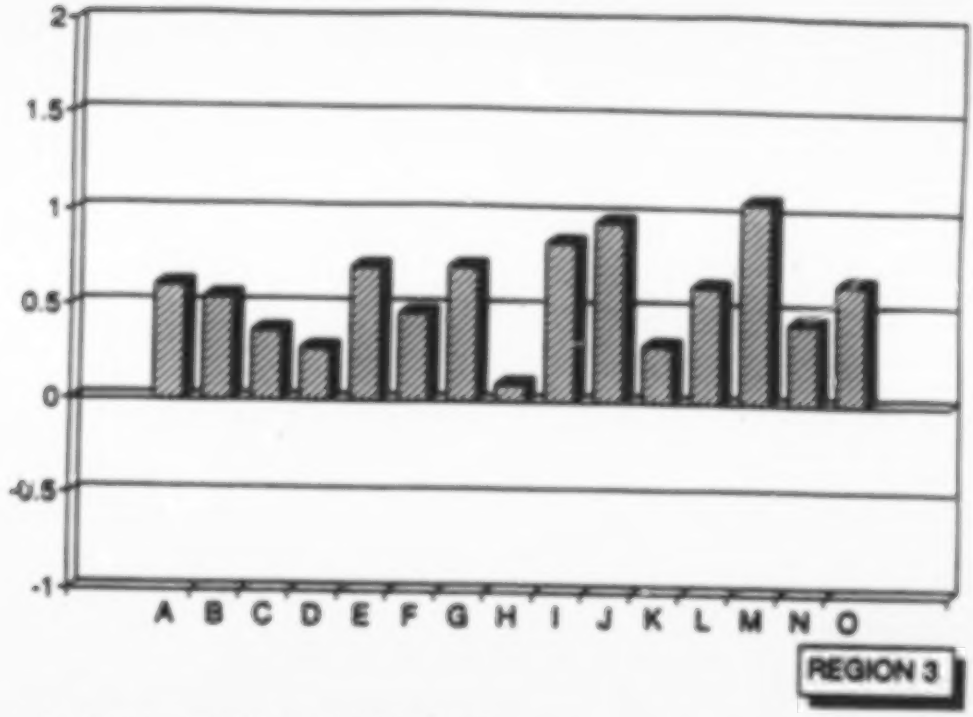


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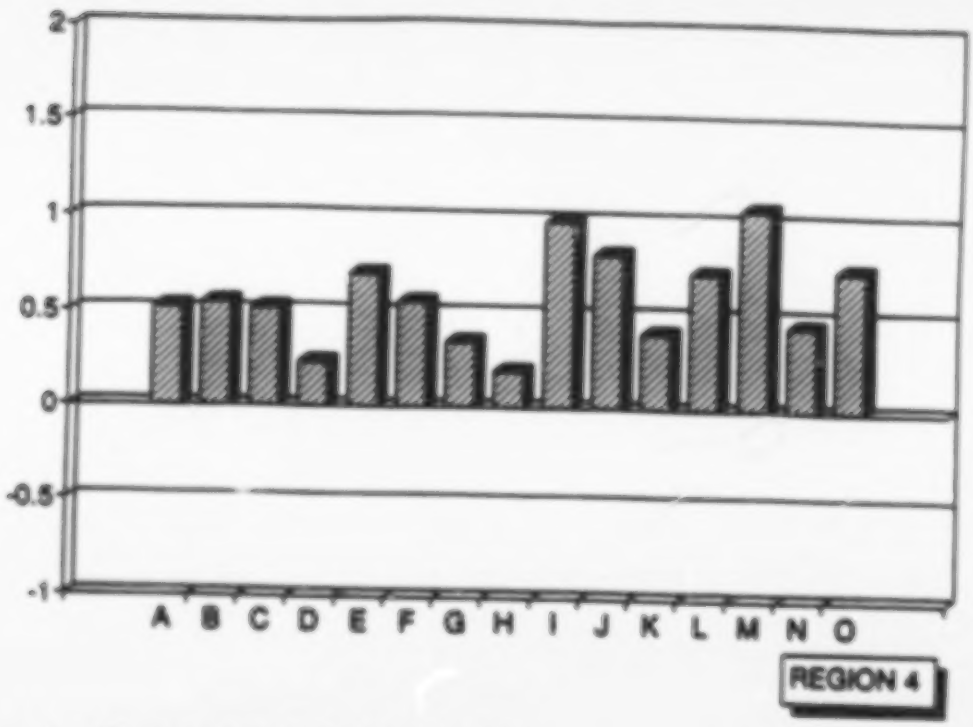


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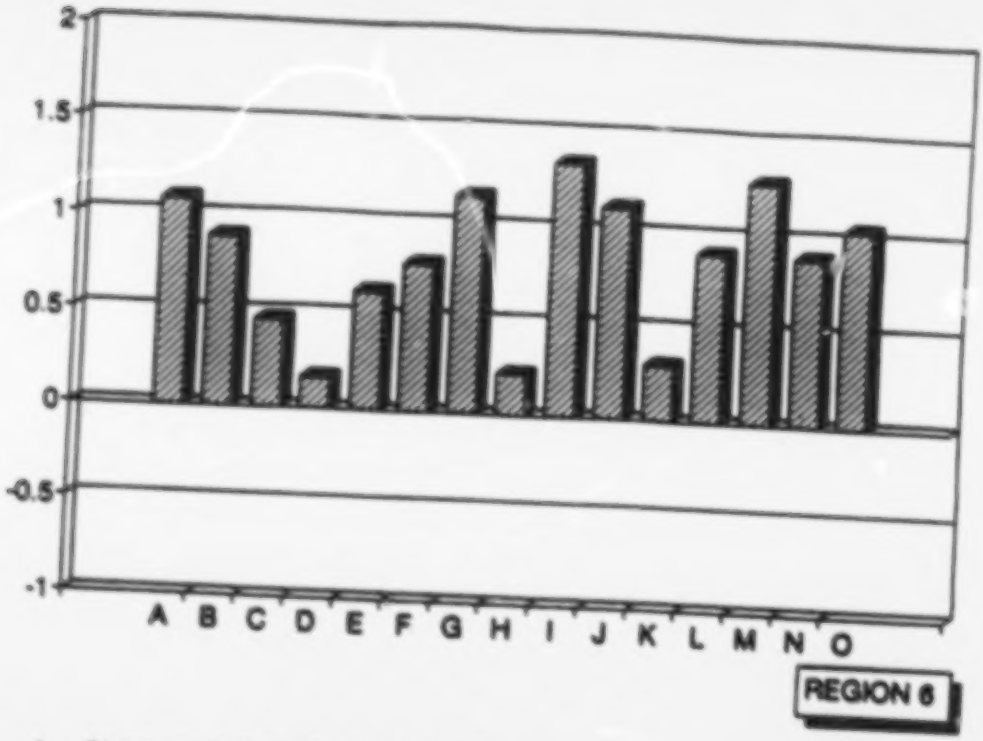


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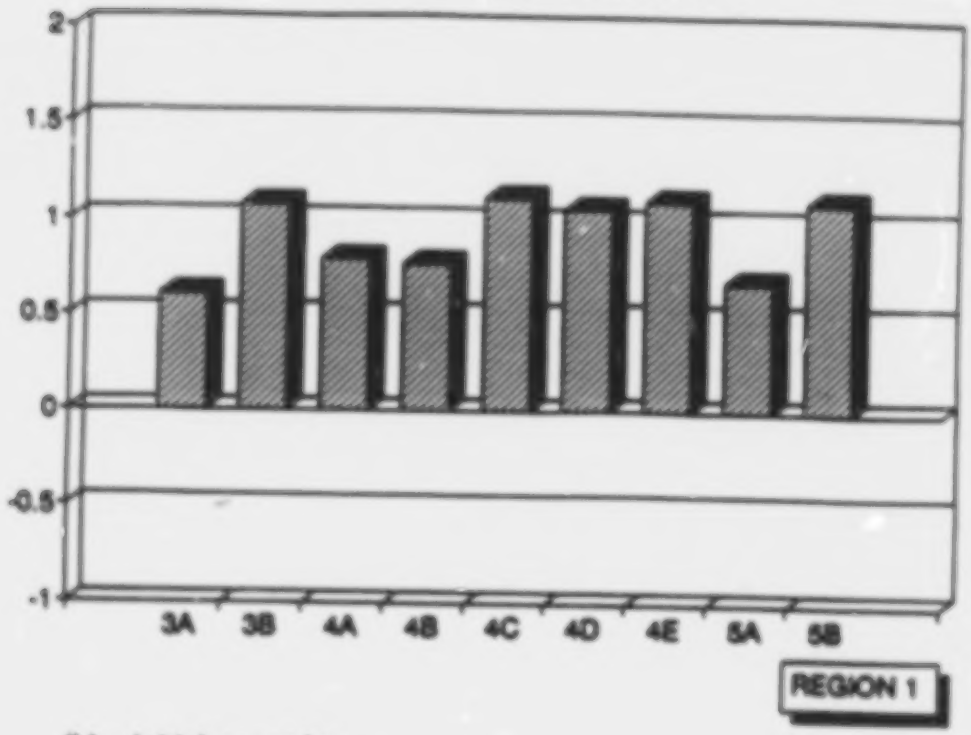
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

The graphs for questions concerning Categories 3, *Observation and Assessment*, 4, *Language and Culture*, and 5, *Community Collaboration*, for each region are found on pages 22-26. The general pattern for each region is similar to that found for the total sample. However, there are some variations by region not found for Categories 1 and 2. The pattern for Category 3 established by the analysis of the total sample shows Content Area 3A *(Initial Screening)*, to be almost half a point lower than that for Content Area 3B *(Authentic Assessment)*. That pattern is maintained only for Regions 1 and 6; in the other three regions, the difference in perceived knowledge gap between the two content areas is considerably smaller.

For content areas included under Category 4, the pattern established in the total sample is maintained without exception among the five regions; the perceived knowledge gap for Content Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E are the largest for any of the content areas, and those for Content Areas 4A and 4B are approximately equal to one another and to that for Content Area 3B. The pattern for Category 5 among the five regions is very similar to that established in the analysis of the total sample, a difference of approximately half a point in the knowledge gap between Content Area 5A *(Collaborating With Other Child / Family Service Agencies)*, and 5B *(How to Access Support and Services from the Private Sector)*. Also, the knowledge gap score for Content Area 5B is almost equal to those for Content Areas 4C, 4D and 4E in all regions except Region 6, where it is about half a point lower. As in the analyses for Categories 1 and 2, Region 6 shows much larger knowledge gap scores for the three content categories of the present analysis.

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

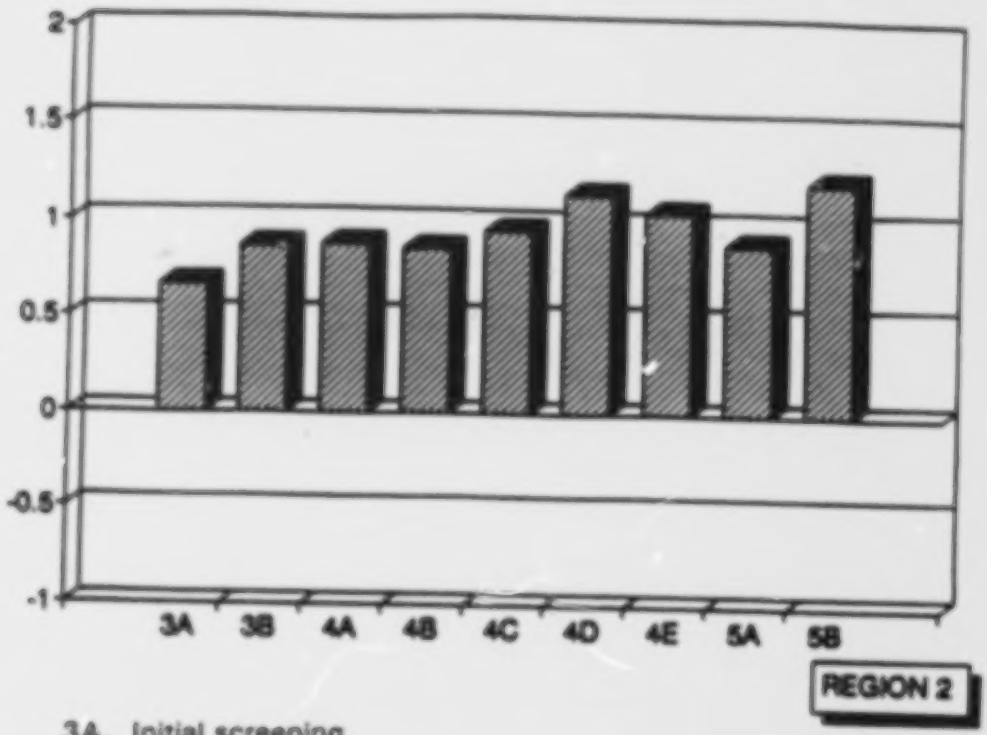



3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

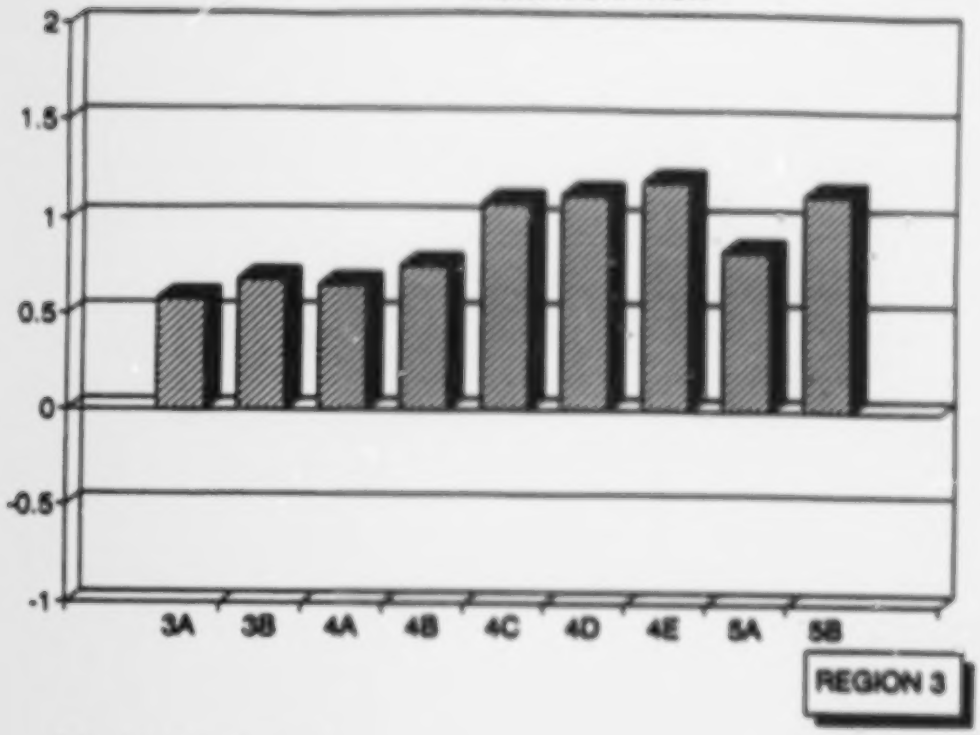



3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

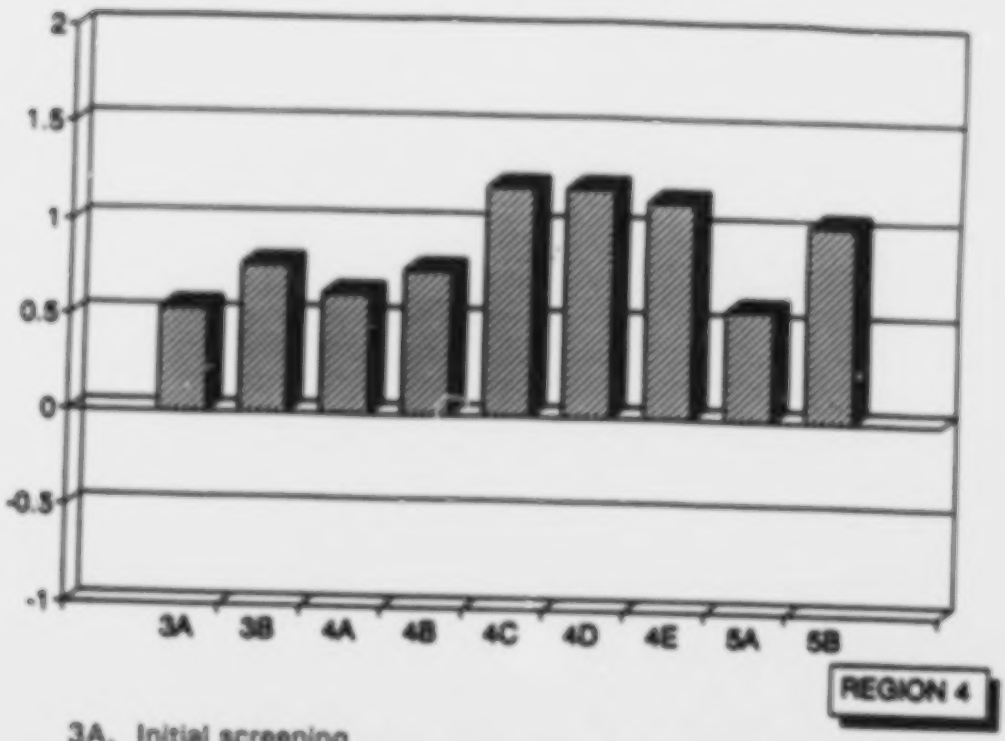



3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

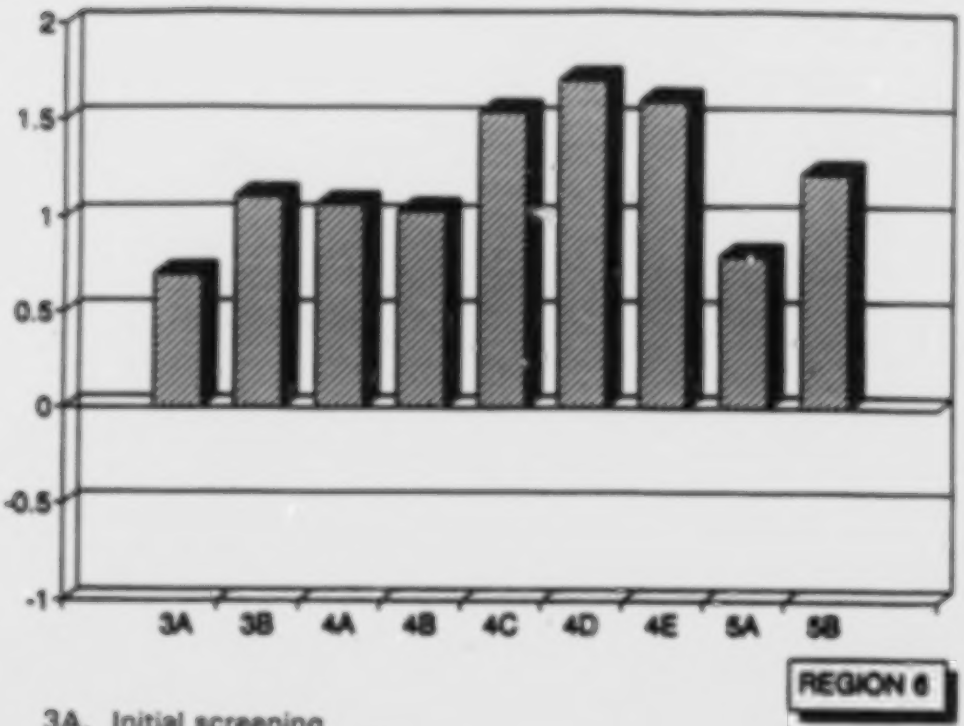



3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION




3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

In summary, then, the analysis of the five regions provides no real indication that staff development and professional growth programs should be based on regional differences. That is, in general there are no substantial differences from the findings obtained in the analysis of the total sample that would indicate that separate development programs should be developed for the various regions. The one content finding from the analysis by region is that the staff of programs in Region 6 have greater perceived knowledge gap scores than do the staff of programs in the other four regions.

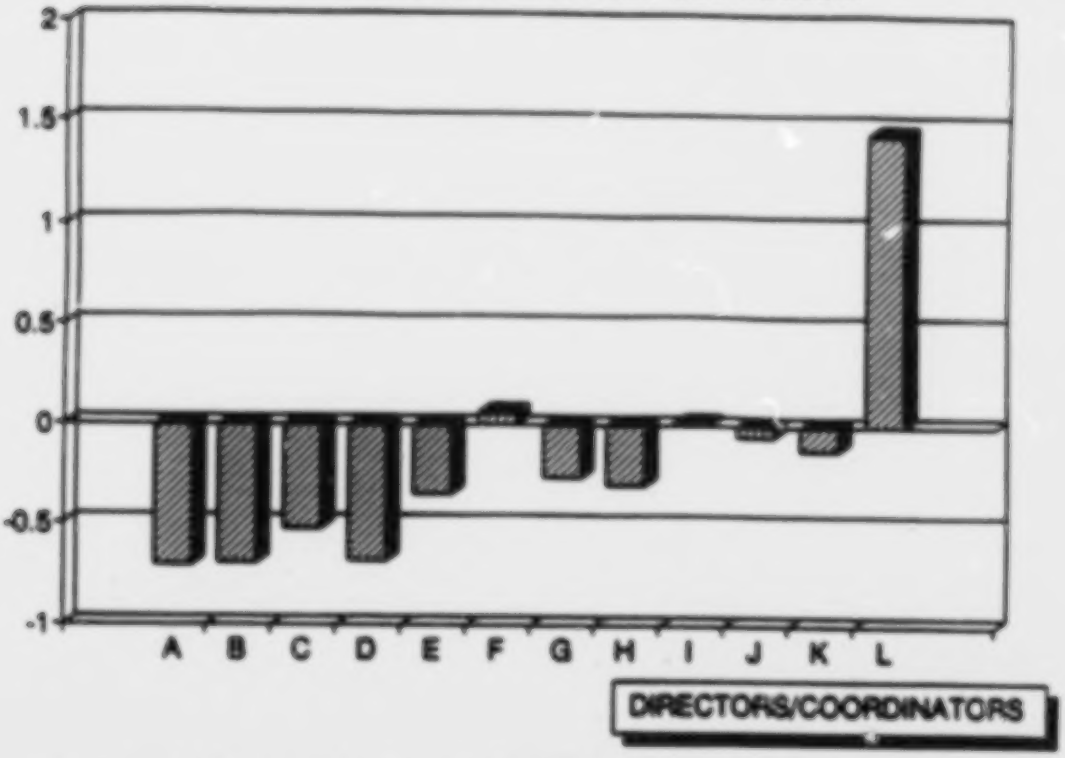
Capacity:

Capacity is the short-hand term used for Question 3 on the questionnaire, "Capacity in which you serve the program / project". The questionnaire provided five possible responses: 1) Teacher; 2) Teacher Assistant / Aide; 3) Parent / Family / Community Coordinator / Liaison; 4) Support Service Provider; and 5) Coordinator / Director. For the following analysis Capacities 3 and 4 have been combined and labeled "Support staff". The graphs for the four groups are presented on pages 29-40.

Even the most cursory examination of the tables for Category 1 will note the differences among the various program capacities and with the total sample. Teachers show negative perceived knowledge gaps for Content Areas 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D, as do the total sample and the coordinators/directors. Teachers also show negative perceived knowledge gaps for Content Areas 1H (*Motor and Physical Development*) and 1K (*Children's Literature*), and very low positive perceived knowledge gaps for Content Areas 1E (*Language and Cognitive development*), 1F (*Literacy Development*), 1G (*Fostering Social Emotional Development*), and 1I (*Creative Arts*). Thus, the only areas of interest for teachers in Category 1 are 1J (*Physical Knowledge*) and 1L (*Using Computers with Young Children*).

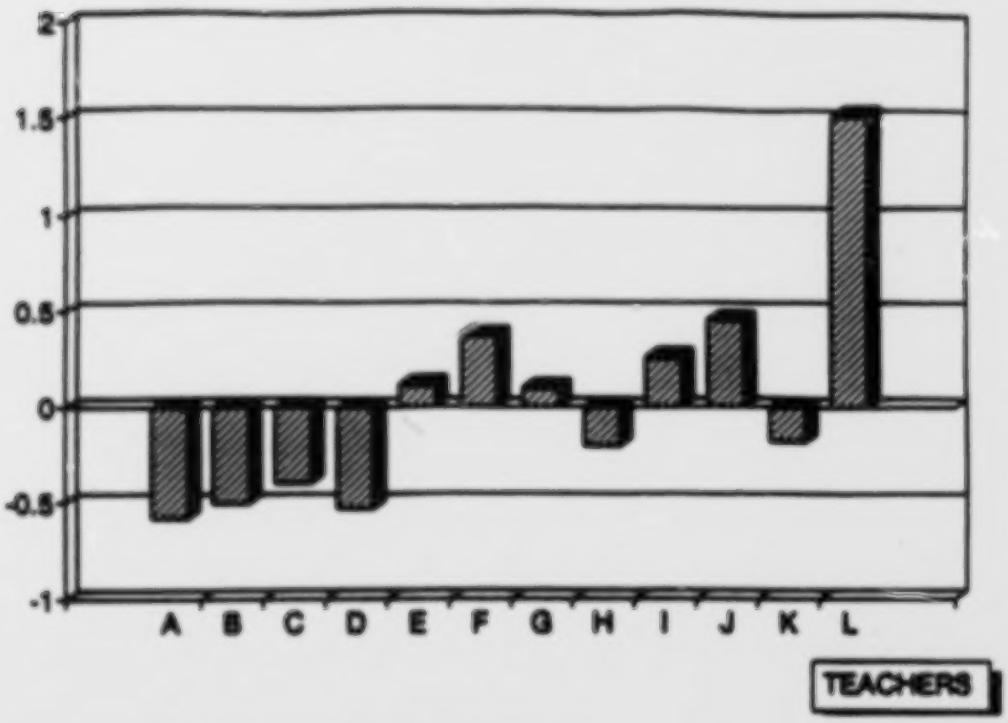
Teacher assistants/aides show no perceived negative knowledge gaps for any content area in Category 1. The perceived knowledge gaps for Content Areas 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, and 1H are all comparatively small, indicating little interest in these content areas. Support staff show negative knowledge gaps for Content Areas 1A, 1B, and 1D and very low positive knowledge gaps for Content Areas 1C, 1E, 1G, 1H, and 1K. This leaves only four areas in Category 1 with perceived knowledge gaps above 0.5: 1F *(Literacy*

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM



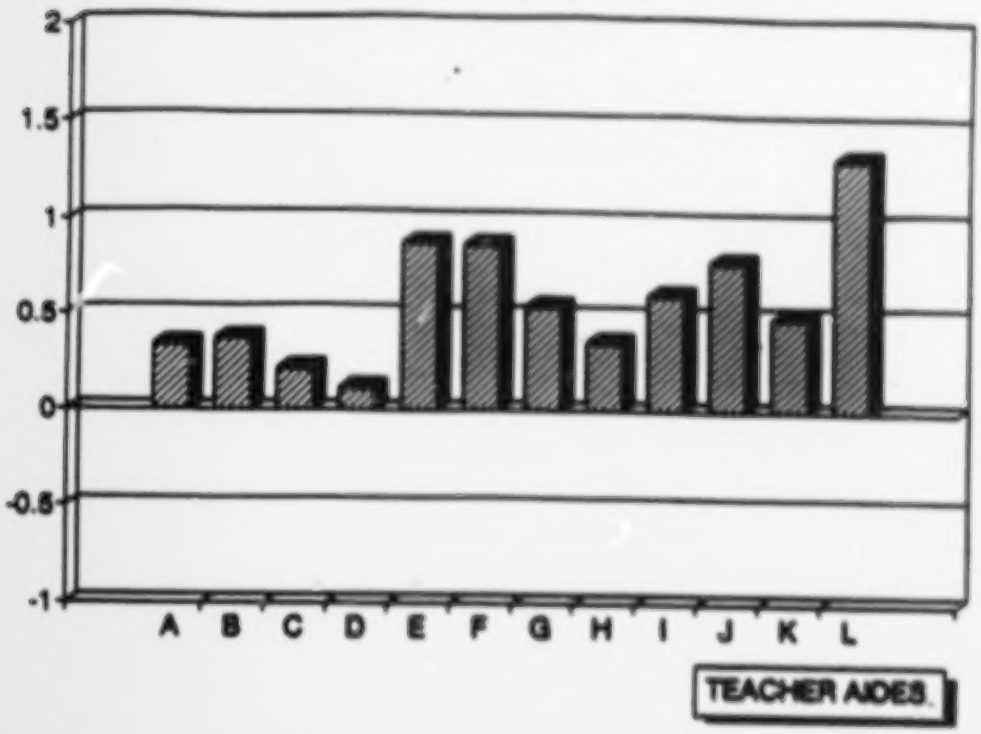

A. Organizing the environment for learning
B. Planning and developing daily scheduling
C. Learning through play
D. Building positive relationships with children
E. Language and cognitive development
F. Literacy development...
G. Fostering social emotional development
H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
K. Children's literature
L. Using computers with young children

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM




A. Organizing the environment for learning
B. Planning and developing daily scheduling
C. Learning through play
D. Building positive relationships with children
E. Language and cognitive development
F. Literacy development...
G. Fostering social emotional development
H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
K. Children's literature
L. Using computers with young children

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM




A. Organizing the environment for learning
B. Planning and developing daily scheduling
C. Learning through play
D. Building positive relationships with children
E. Language and cognitive development
F. Literacy development...
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H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
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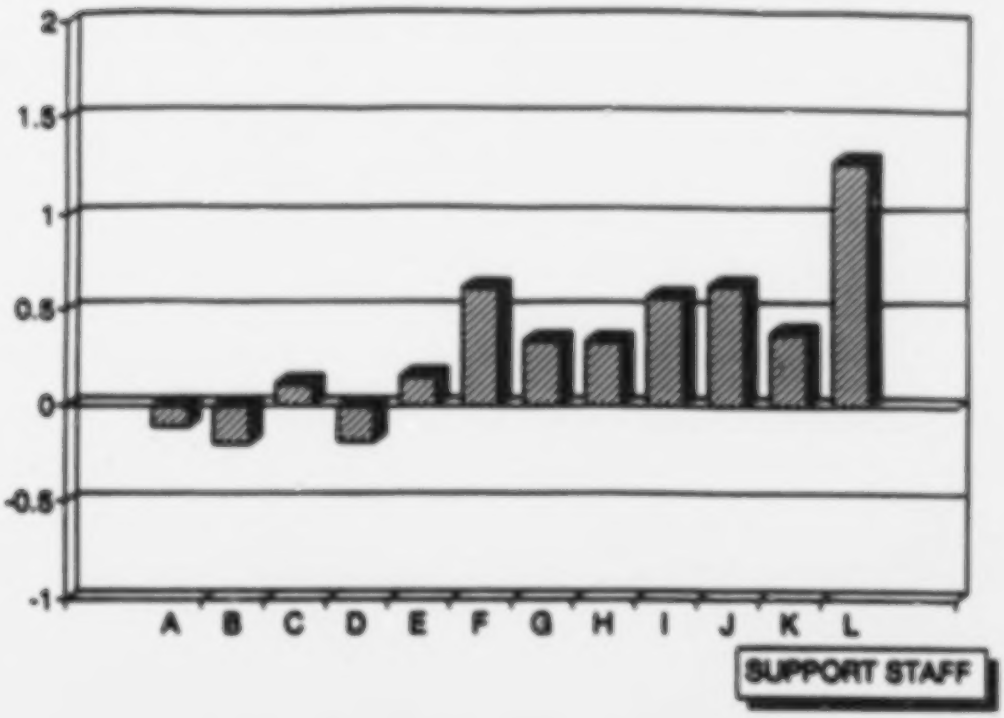
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM




A. Organizing the environment for learning
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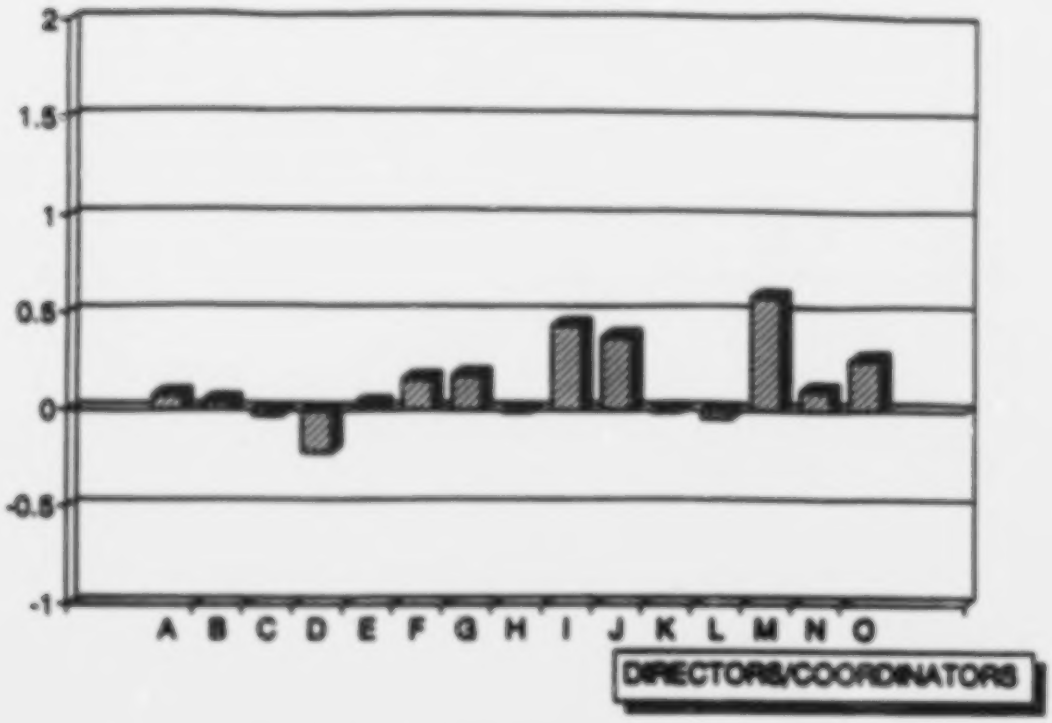
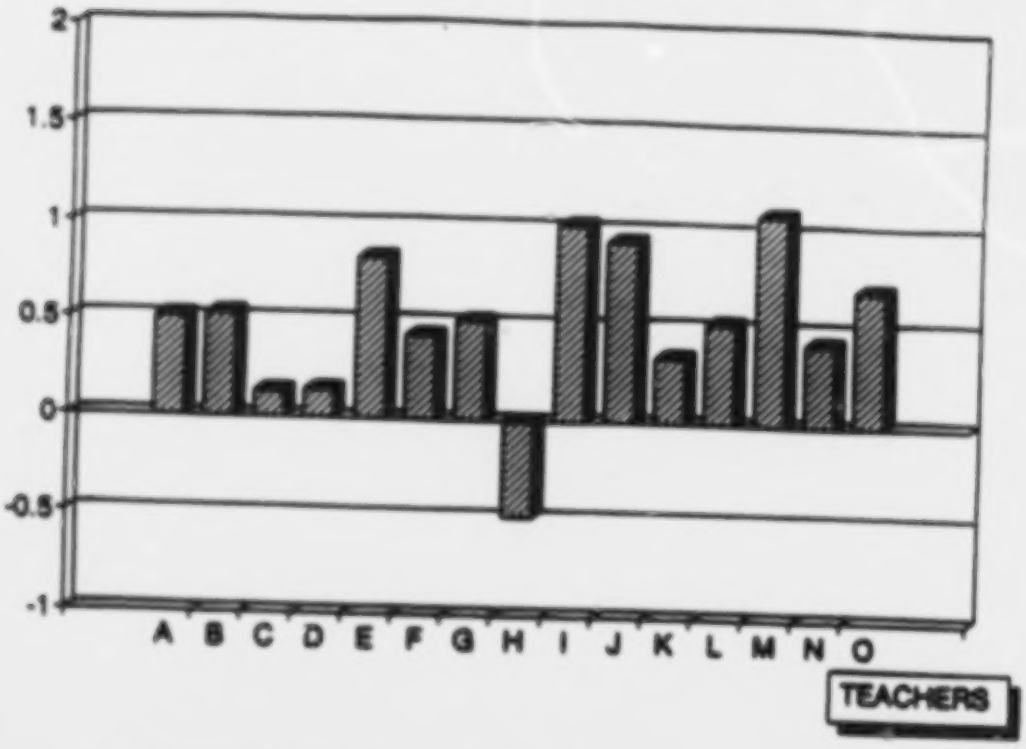
F. Literacy development...
G. Fostering social emotional development
H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
K. Children's literature
L. Using computers with young children

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
C. Attachment and separation issues
D. Communicating effectively with parents
E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
G. Planning and implementing parent workshops
H. Planning and implementing home visits
I. Development of parent support groups
J. Family literacy issues
K. Developing lending toy libraries
L. Child abuse and neglect issues
M. Children and families affected by substance abuse
N. Surveying parent interests...
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS

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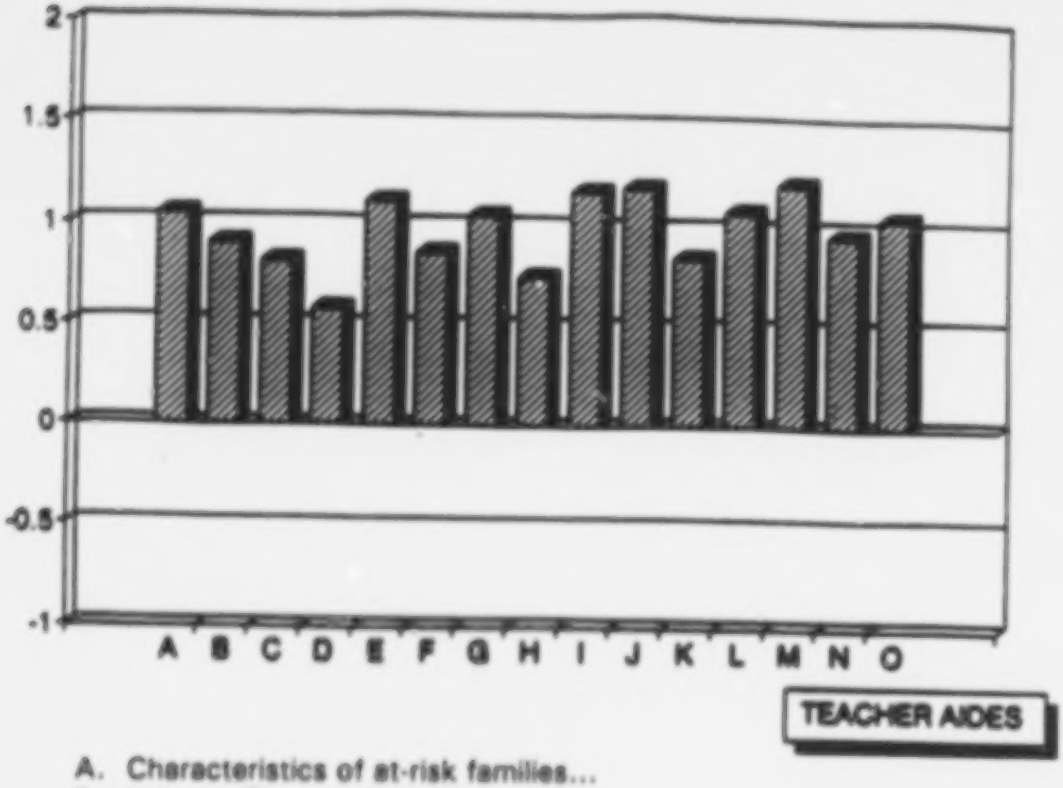
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
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E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
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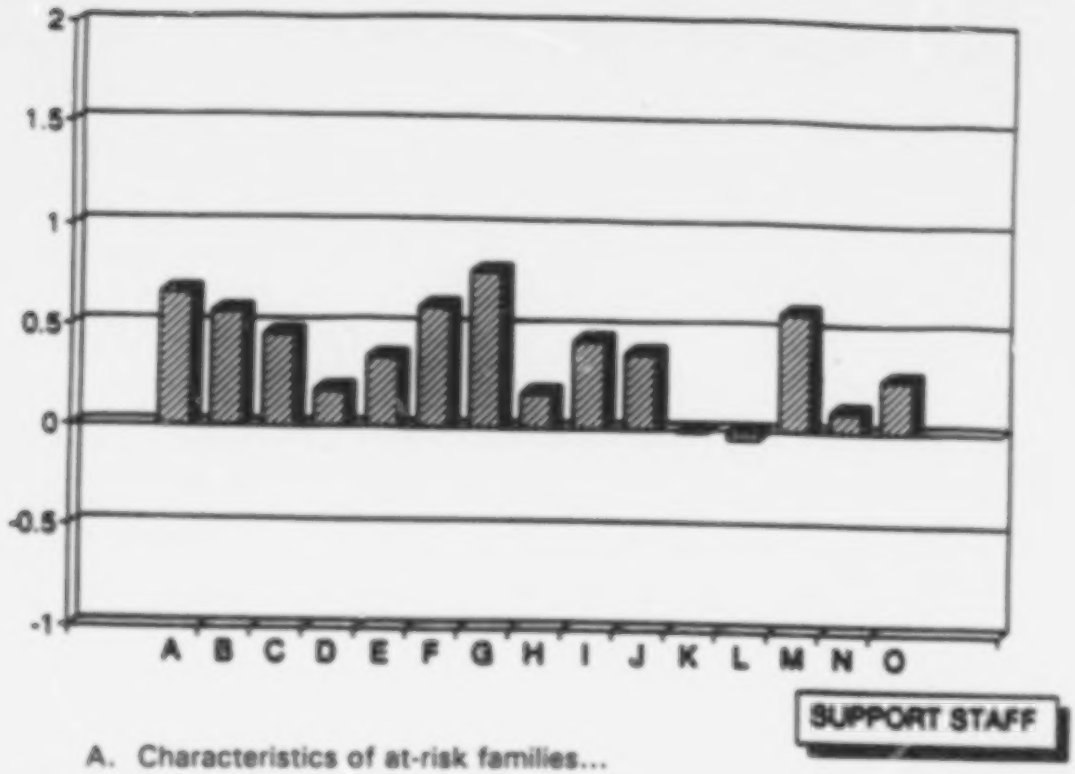
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
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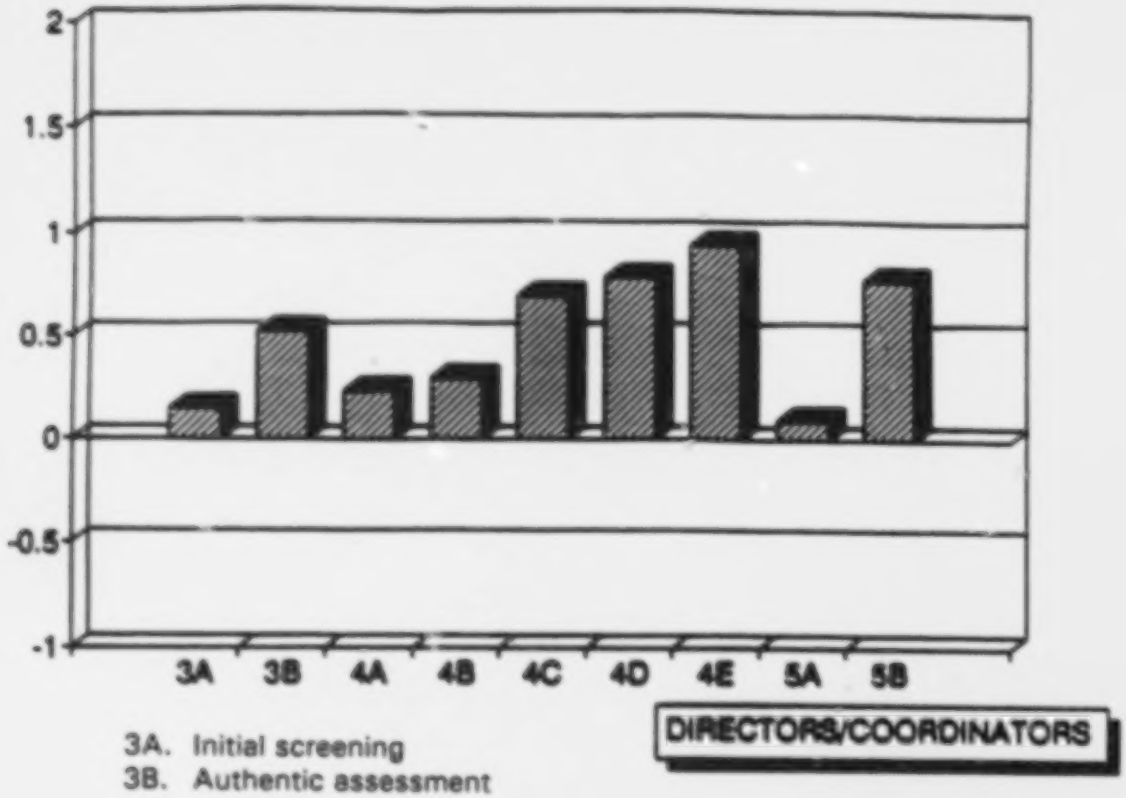
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

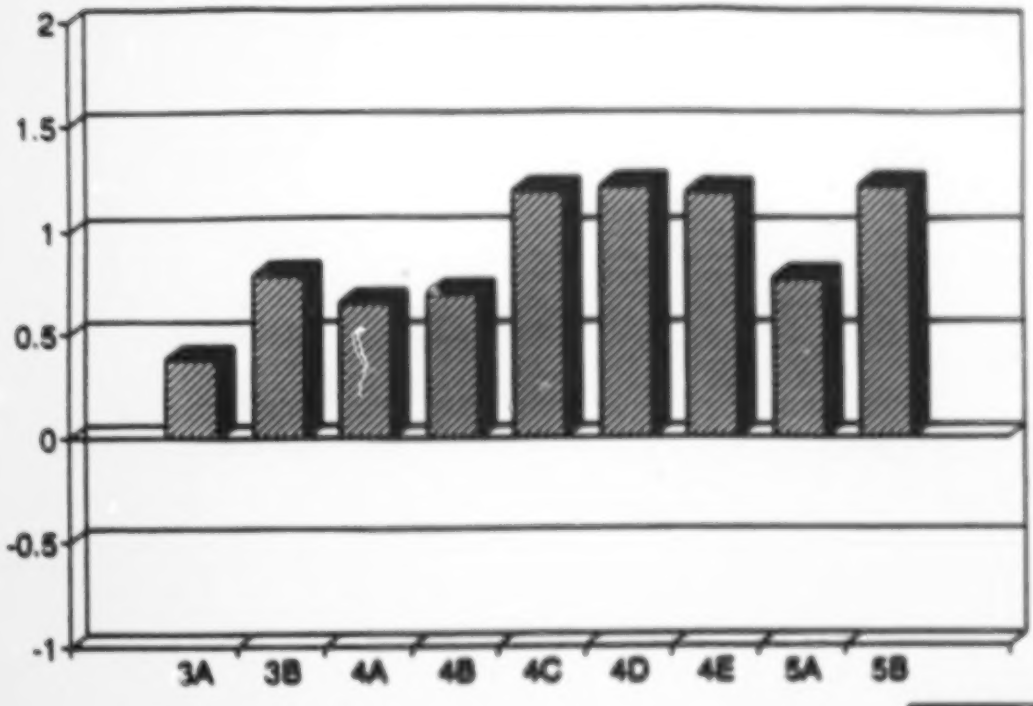



3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION




3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

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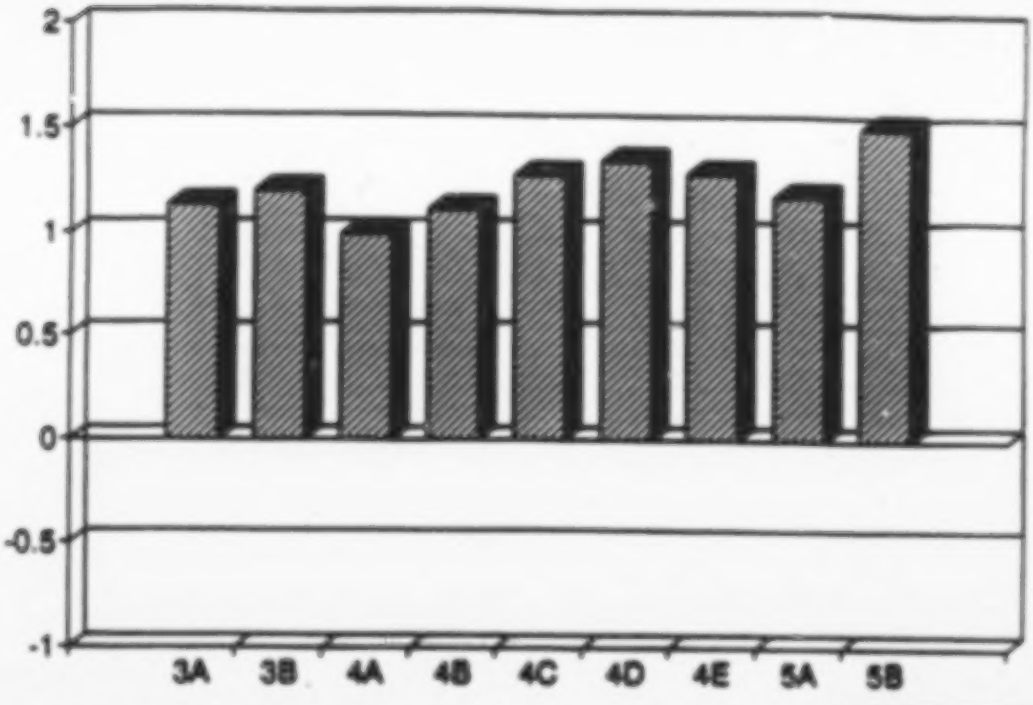
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION



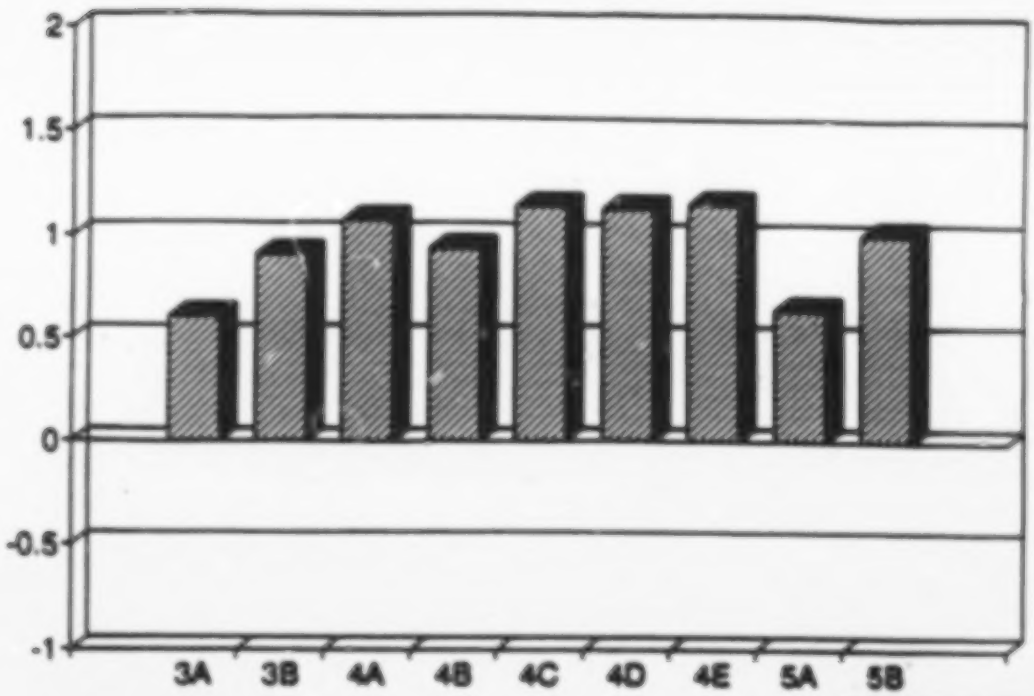

TEACHER AIDES

3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION




3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

*Development)*, 1I *(Creative Arts)*, 1J *(Physical Knowledge)*, and 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children)*. Coordinators / directors show the least perceived knowledge gap for all content areas included in category 1. Only Area 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children)*, has a substantial positive knowledge gap.

Based on the preceding analysis, staff development - professional growth programs in *Using Computers with Young Children* would be interesting for all personnel. Furthermore, *Literacy Development, Creative Arts* and *Physical Knowledge* would be appropriate if targeted for teacher assistants / aides and support staff. Additionally, teacher assistants / aides would benefit from a program in fostering social emotional development.

The distribution of perceived knowledge gap by the content areas included in Category 2 is very much different for each of the program capacity categories. Teachers have a negative perceived knowledge gap for Content Area 2H *(Planning and Implementing Home Visits)*. They also have low positive perceived knowledge gaps for Content Areas 2C *(Attachment and Separation Issues)*, and 2D *(Communicating Effectively with Parents)*. Also, the perceived knowledge gap for areas 2F (*Developing Ideas for At-Home Activities Involving Parent and Child)*, 2K (*Developing Toy Lending Libraries)*, and 2L (*Child Abuse and Child Neglect Issues*) is so low that none of these areas could be considered to be in great demand by teachers. The content areas in this category most interesting to teachers for staff development / professional growth programs are 2M (*Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse)*, 2I (*Development of Parent Support Groups)*, 2J (*Family Literacy Issues)*, 2E (*Assessing*

*Family Needs, Making Referrals, and Following-Up*) and 2G (*Planning and Implementing Parent Workshops).*

As was the case with content areas included in Category 1, not a single area included with Category 2 has a negative perceived knowledge gap score for teacher assistants / aides. Furthermore, all of the perceived knowledge gap scores are large enough to indicate that a staff development - professional growth program on any subject area in this category would be appropriate for teacher assistants / aides. The content areas of most interest to teacher assistants / aides are 2M (*Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse),* 2I (*Development of Parental Support Groups*), 2J (*Family Literacy Issues),* 2E (*Assessing Family Needs, Making Referrals, and Following-Up*), and 2G *(Planning and Implementing Parent Workshops),* the same areas most interesting to teachers.

One content area of Category 2 has a negative perceived knowledge gap for support staff: 2L *(Child Abuse and Child Neglect Issues).* While the perceived knowledge gap for all remaining content areas in Category 2 are positive, none are very large. The most important content area for support staff is 2G (*Planning and Implementing Parent Workshops*), followed by 2A (*Characteristics of At-Risk Families and Meeting Their Needs,* 2F (*Developing Ideas for At-Home Activities Involving Parent and Child),* 2M (*Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse)* and 2B (*Issues Affecting Parent Involvement*), in that order.

None of the content areas covered by Category 2 appear to be of much interest for staff development - professional growth programs to the coordinators/directors. While only Content Area 2D (*Communicating Effectively with Parents*) has a negative

perceived knowledge gap, none of the positive perceived knowledge gaps are above 0.5 except for 2M (*Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse*).

The only content area of interest to all personnel is 2M. Teachers and teacher assistants / aides, have similar interests, but teacher assistants show the most interest in all content areas. Support staff have very different interests and coordinators / directors have almost no interest at all for this set of content areas.

Although the actual perceived knowledge gap scores for teachers and coordinators / directors are very different, the patterns presented by both groups follow the same pattern as the total sample for the content areas in Categories 3, 4, and 5. The highest scores are for Content Areas 4C (*Working with Multiple Language Groups*), 4D (*Second Language Acquisition*), 4E (*First and Second Language Use in the Classroom*) and 5A (*How to Access Support and Services from the Private Sector*). Content Areas 3A (*Initial Screening*) and 5A (*Collaborating with Other Child/Family Service Agencies*) have the lowest perceived knowledge gap scores and Content Areas 3B (*Authentic Assessment*), 4A (*Anti-Bias Curriculum*) and 4B (*Multiculturalism*), are between the high group and the low group of content areas. The major difference between teachers and coordinators / directors is the magnitude of the perceived knowledge gap scores; for teachers most of the scores range from 0.4 to 1.2 while for coordinators / directors the scores range from 0.2 to 0.8.

For teacher assistants / aides, the lowest score for the three categories is about 1.0 for Area 4A and the highest is about 1.3 for 4D. Thus the degree of variation is very small for this personnel group, yet the absolute values of their perceived knowledge gap is comparatively high.

The perceived knowledge gap scores for support staff fall between those for teacher assistants / aides and those for teachers. While there are slight variations in the order of importance of the content areas of the support staff compared to either the teachers or teacher assistants / aides, the general pattern is essentially the same.

The capacity in which one serves the program / project is a critical dimension in determining staff development / professional growth programs in the content areas contained in Categories 1 and 2 but is of very little, if any, importance for programs in the content areas contained in Categories 3, 4 and 5.

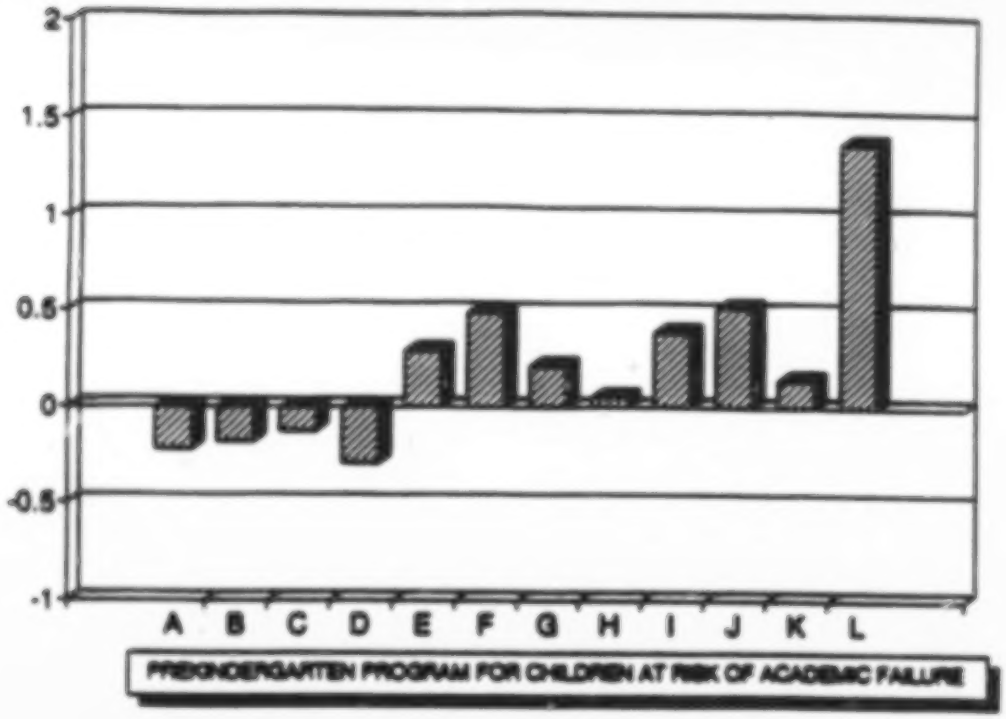
**Program:**

There are three early childhood programs funded by the Illinois State Board of Education: *Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure*, *Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families*, and *Model Early Childhood Parental Training Programs*. The graphs of the content areas included in Category 1 for the three programs are presented on pages 46 to 48. There are very few differences among the three programs for the content areas included in Category 1. With a few exceptions, they are almost all replicas of the graph for the total sample. The most obvious exception is for the *Prevention Initiative Programs for At-Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families*, where the perceived knowledge gap for Content Area 1C *(Learning Through Play)*, is slightly positive compared to the negative value found for the total sample and seen in the other two programs.

The positive score, however, is so small as to make it insignificant in relation to the other values. Thus, the Early Childhood program makes no difference in determining

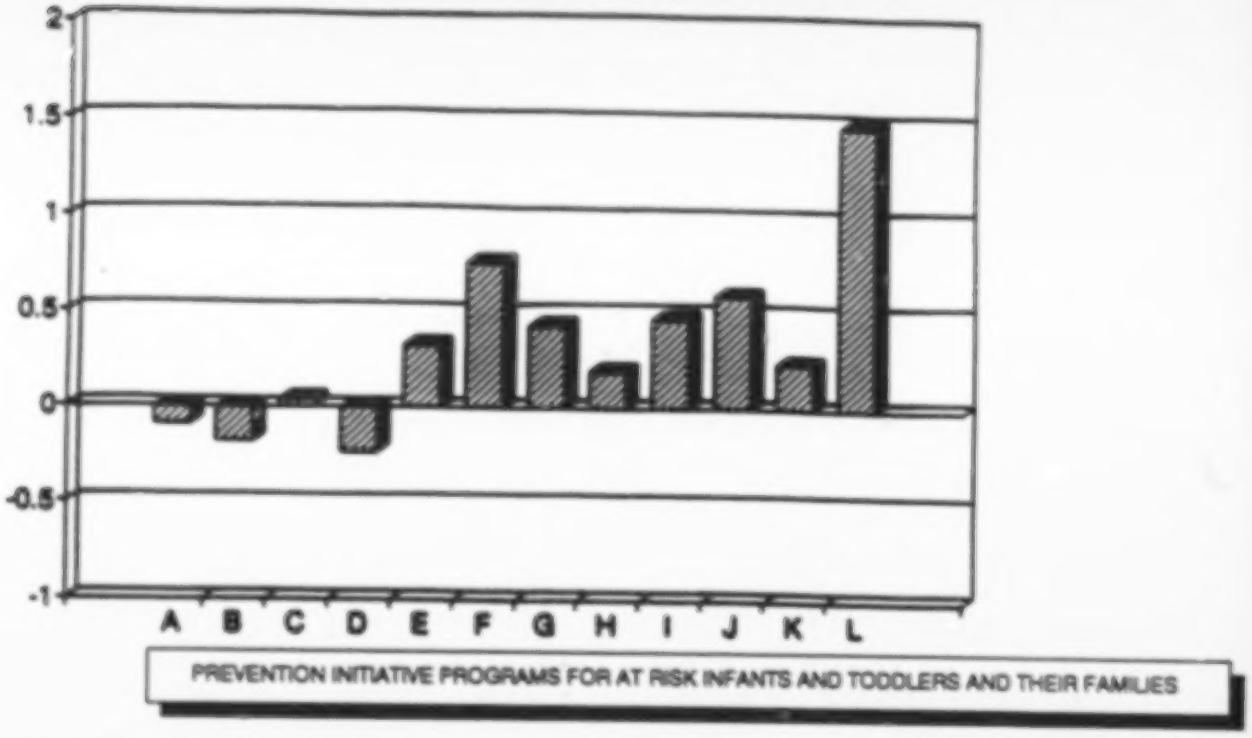
which staff development/professional growth programs should be initiated. The pattern established by the content areas included in Category 1 is maintained for the content areas included in Category 2; very little difference exists among the three programs or in the results for the total sample. The graphs for the *Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure* and the *Model Early Childhood Parental Training Programs* are identical to the graph for the total sample. The only variation in the perceived knowledge gap of the content areas included in Question 2 is found in the *Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families.* The perceived knowledge gap for Content Area 2H ( *Planning and Implementing Home Visits),* is considerably less than for either of the other two programs or for the total sample. That area, however, has a comparatively low perceived knowledge gap score for the other two programs and for the total sample; thus, the reduction for the *Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families* is relatively unimportant.

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM




A. Organizing the environment for learning
B. Planning and developing daily scheduling
C. Learning through play
D. Building positive relationships with children
E. Language and cognitive development
F. Literacy development...
G. Fostering social emotional development
H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
K. Children's literature
L. Using computers with young children

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM

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E. Language and cognitive development
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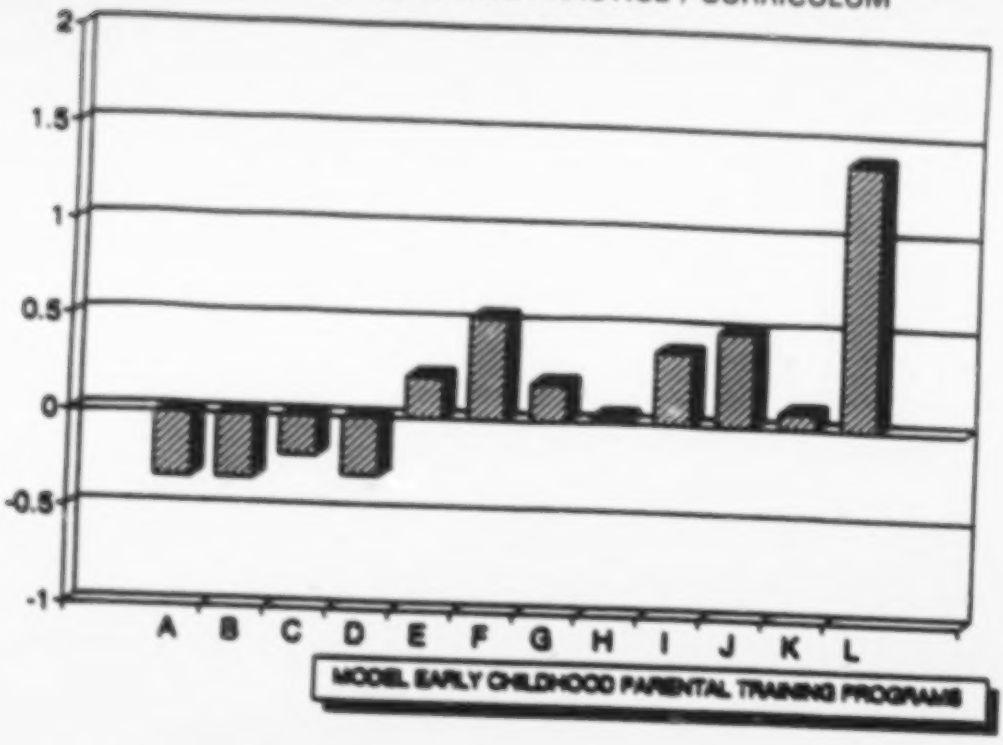
L. Using computers with young children

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 1: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE / CURRICULUM

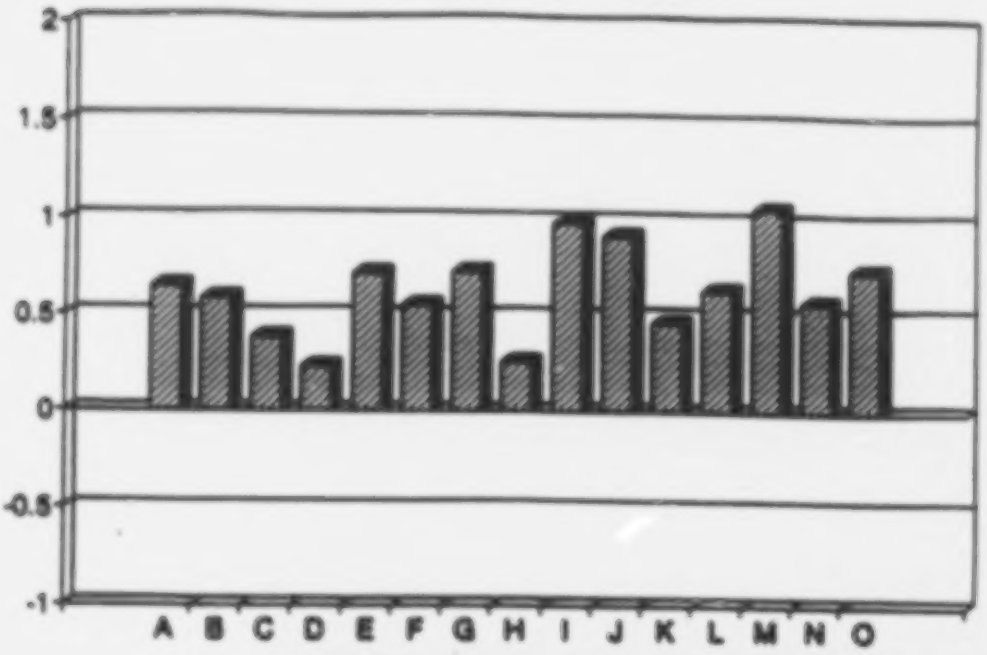



A. Organizing the environment for learning
B. Planning and developing daily scheduling
C. Learning through play
D. Building positive relationships with children
E. Language and cognitive development
F. Literacy development...
G. Fostering social emotional development
H. Motor and physical development
I. Creative arts
J. Physical knowledge...
K. Children's literature
L. Using computers with young children

The litany recited above for the content areas included in Categories 1 and 2 can be repeated for those included in Categories 3, 4, and 5. Only very small differences in the overall patterns of perceived knowledge gap are observed among the three programs for the content areas included in Categories 3, 4, and 5. The most noticeable differences are for Content Areas 3B, 4A and 4B in the graph for *Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families*. The three content areas noted have somewhat greater positive knowledge gaps for the *Prevention Initiative* than for the other two programs or for the total sample.

The program in which the respondent participates provides no additional information other than that noted for the total sample in planning staff development / professional growth training programs.

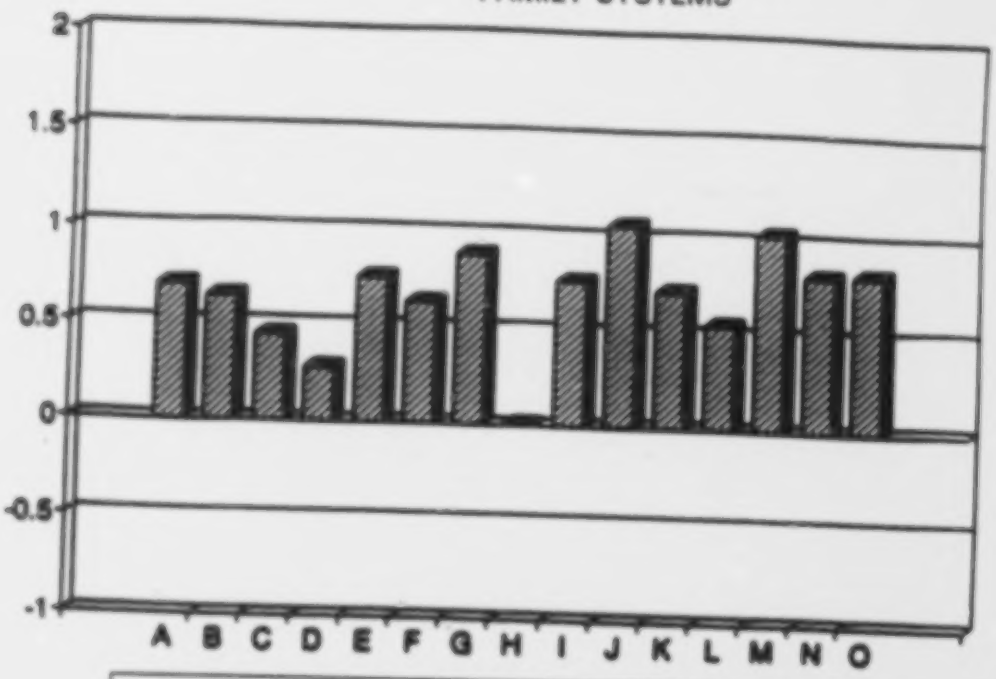
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE

A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
C. Attachment and separation issues
D. Communicating effectively with parents
E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
G. Planning and implementing parent workshops
H. Planning and implementing home visits
I. Development of parent support groups
J. Family literacy issues
K. Developing lending toy libraries
L. Child abuse and neglect issues
M. Children and families affected by substance abuse
N. Surveying parent interests...
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




PREVENTION INITIATIVE PROGRAMS FOR AT RISK INFANTS AND TODDLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
C. Attachment and separation issues
D. Communicating effectively with parents
E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
G. Planning and implementing parent workshops
H. Planning and implementing home visits
I. Development of parent support groups
J. Family literacy issues
K. Developing lending toy libraries
L. Child abuse and neglect issues
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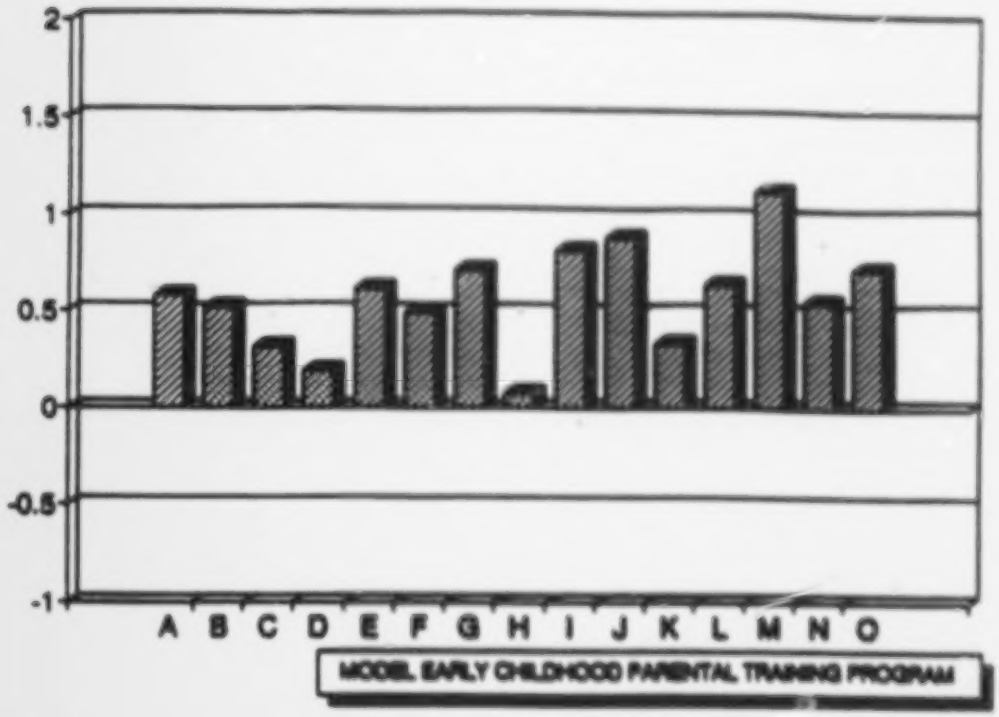
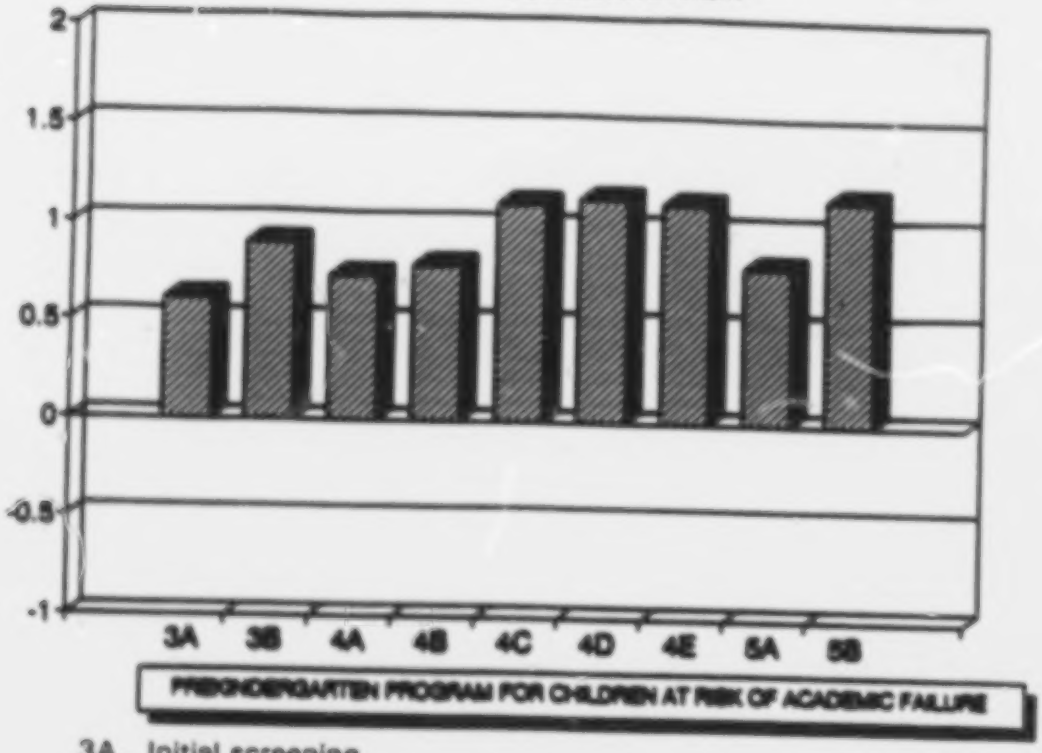
N. Surveying parent interests...
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORY 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SYSTEMS




A. Characteristics of at-risk families...
B. Issues affecting parent involvement...
C. Attachment and separation issues
D. Communicating effectively with parents
E. Assessing family needs...
F. Developing ideas for at home activities...
G. Planning and implementing parent workshops
H. Planning and implementing home visits
I. Development of parent support groups
J. Family literacy issues
K. Developing lending toy libraries
L. Child abuse and neglect issues
M. Children and families affected by substance abuse
N. Surveying parent interests...
O. Understanding the principles of adult learning

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

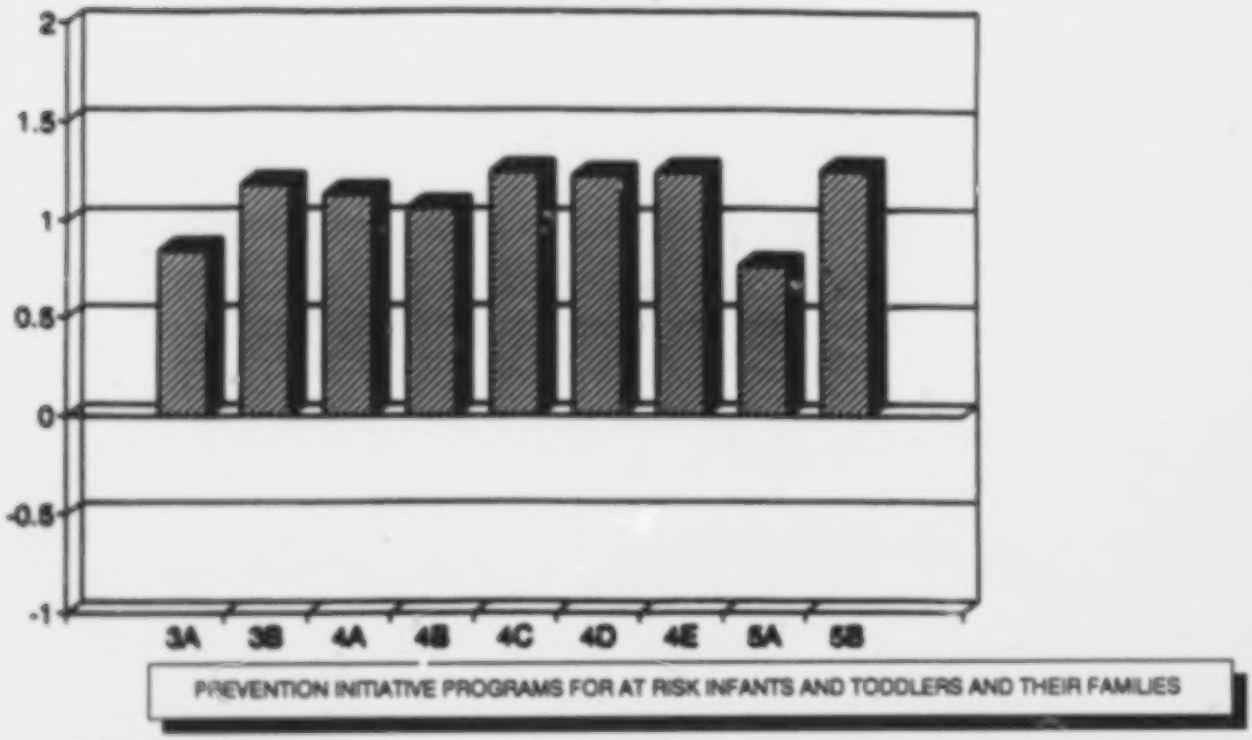



3A. Initial screening
3B. Authentic assessment

4A. Anti-bias curriculum
4B. Multiculturalism
4C. Working with multiple language groups
4D. Second language acquisition
4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION




3A. Initial screening
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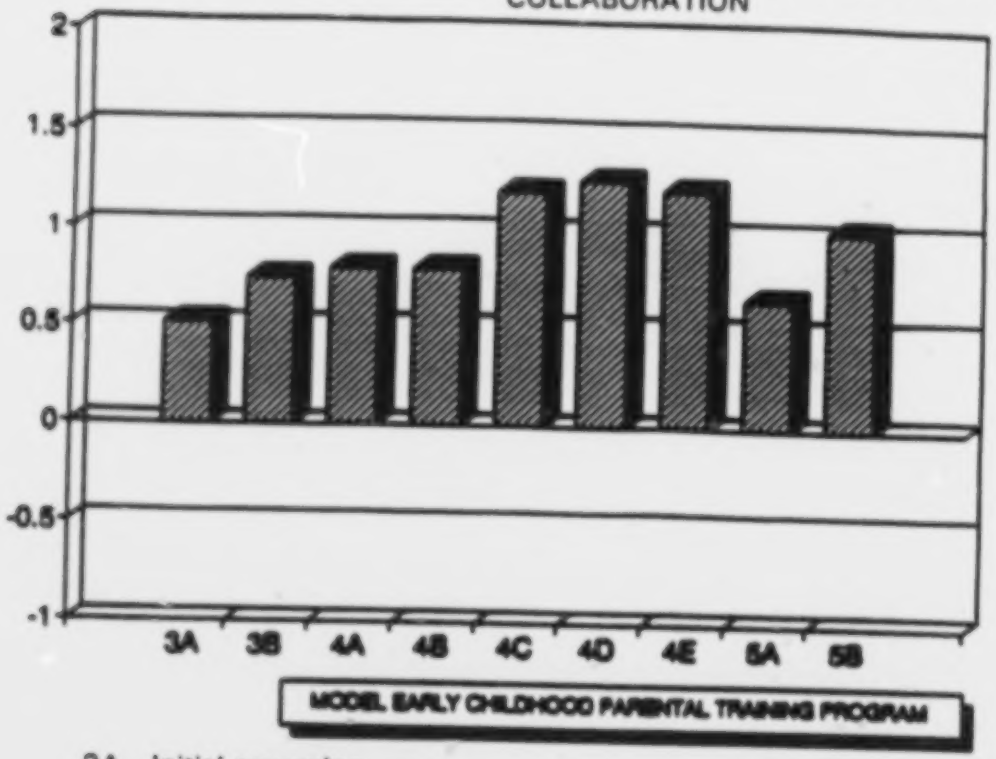
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE GAP BY CATEGORIES 3, 4 & 5: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT; LANGUAGE AND CULTURE; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION




3A. Initial screening
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4A. Anti-bias curriculum
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4E. First and second language use in the classroom

5A. Collaborating with other child/family service agencies
5B. How to access support and services from the private sector

**SUMMARY:**

This research addressed the problem of the interests of the administrators, staff members and other personnel associated with three early childhood education programs funded by the Illinois State Board of Education: *Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure, Prevention Initiative Programs for At Risk Infants and Toddlers and Their Families,* and *Model Early Childhood Parental Training Programs.* Interests were divided into five categories: *Developmentally Appropriate Practice Curriculum; Family Involvement / Family Systems; Observation and Assessment; Language and Culture;* and *Community Collaboration,* consisting of from two to fifteen content areas. Also, we tried to see how the interest of the staff varied by region, type of program, and capacity of the staff member within the program which he or she serves.

The results for the total sample indicate that Categories 3, 4 and 5 form the single most important set of areas in the analysis. Category 4, Language and Culture—specifically, 4C *(Working with Multiple Language Groups),* 4D *(Second Language Acquisition),* and 4E *(First and Second Language Use in the Classroom)*— are of most interest to the respondents of the questionnaire. The "knowledge gap" scores for those content areas were the highest for each region, program and administrative / staff capacity.

Category 5, *Community Collaboration,* is the second most important content category. Content Area 5B *(How to Access Support and Services from the Private Sector),* has a knowledge gap score only slightly lower than that of Content Area 4C. Of the two content areas included in Category 3, 3B *(Authentic Assessment)* has the highest knowledge gap score.

the two content areas included in Category 3, 3B *(Authentic Assessment)* has the highest knowledge gap score.

Respondents also expressed a high level of interest in Category 2, *Family Involvement / Family Systems.* Content areas receiving particular attention were: 2M *(Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse);* 2I *(Development of Parent Support Groups);* and 2J *(Family Literacy Issues).*

While Category 1, Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum, was the only one which displayed negative knowledge gaps, it contained the highest absolute knowledge gap score for the total sample, namely, Content Area 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children).* Content Areas 1F *(Literacy Development),* and 1J *(Physical Knowledge),* were also of significant interest to respondents.

Similar findings resulted from the analysis by region. The pattern established in the analysis of the total sample was replicated in each region. There was, however, one consistent difference found in the analysis by region; Region 6 always had higher perceived knowledge gap scores than the other regions. Such a finding would seem to indicate that Region 6 may be the area in which programs are first presented. Whether their perceived knowledge gap scores are due to a lack of knowledge / experience or an excess of interest in knowing more makes no difference. If they truly lack knowledge then they should be brought up to the level of the rest of the state. On the other hand, if the interest in knowing more is truly higher, then their enthusiasm should be rewarded. More than likely it is partly one and partly the other, which makes it the perfect test site for new staff development / professional growth programs.

sample for Categories 3, 4, and 5. Teacher assistants / aides showed greater perceived knowledge gaps for all content areas than the total sample. Support staff, consisting of parent / family / community coordinator / liaison and support service providers, showed somewhat greater perceived knowledge scores for content areas included in Category 1, somewhat lower perceived knowledge gap scores for Category 2, and approximately the same scores for Categories 3, 4, and 5. Coordinators / directors showed considerably lower perceived knowledge gap scores for all content areas in all categories.

The results by capacity follow a differentiation by specialization quite consistent with their respective knowledge / experience. Teachers are least interested in what they already know -- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum* and *Family Involvement / Family Systems* -- but express great interest in areas with which they are unfamiliar, such as *Observation and Assessment*, *Language and Culture*, and *Community Collaboration*. Teacher assistants / aides, with no real professional training, want to learn more about everything. Support staff have considerable knowledge / experience in *Family Involvement / Family Systems*, but would like to learn more about *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum* and *Observation and Assessment*, *Language and Culture*, and *Community Collaboration*. Directors / coordinators have more knowledge and experience in all aspects of early childhood education, as they should, and consequently have less need to learn more about the specific subject areas.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

From the foregoing discussion it would appear that a staff development / professional growth program should offer the following categories: *Language and*

*Culture, Community Collaboration, Observation and Assessment,* Family Involvement / Family Systems and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice / Curriculum.* Everyone would benefit from information on: 4C *(Working with Multiple Language Groups);* 4D *(Second Language Acquisition);* 4E *(First and Second Language Use in the Classroom);* and 1L *(Using Computers with Young Children).* Teachers would appear to benefit from a program dealing with 2M *(Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse),* 2I *(Development of Parent Support Groups),* and 2J *(Family Literacy Issues).* For support staff, Content Areas 2G *(Planning and Implementing Parent Workshops),* 1F *(Literacy Development),* 1I *(Creative Arts)* and 1J *(Physical Knowledge)* would be appropriate. Teacher assistants/aides could pick and choose among those offered to teachers and those offered to support staff. The first four would be directed particularly at coordinators / directors.

Planning and implementing staff development/professional growth programs requires a delicate balance of many competing interests. What, for example, is considered the most important content, irrespective of perceived knowledge/experience? What are the logistics of the program? Is it easiest and most cost effective to bring those for whom the program is planned to one central location, or is it easier to take the program to various locations or regions? And, of course, what are the interests of the people for whom the program is designed? These and many other factors must be taken into account in the planning process of the staff development/professional growth program.